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CONFRONTING IDENTIFICATIONS: UKRAINIAN-POLISH RELATIONS OF POWER FROM AN IRISH PERSPECTIVE SINCE THE XIX CENTURY

Abstract. The purpose. The two-centuries-length evolution of Irish-Polish and Irish-Ukrainian relations through identification processes are not unknown to historians, whether they are from Ireland, Poland or Ukraine. **Scientific novelty.** However, those comparisons are often based on Ukrainian and Polish national narratives, often contradicting each other, as confirmed by ongoing historical debates- and still, links of both countries with Ireland were rarely confronted by historians. The article would question the way representations of hierarchies between Poles and Ukraine evolved since the mid – 19th century, from the emergence of Ukrainian national movements to the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. But through a specific lens: comparisons of Polish, and Ukrainian history (and societies) with Irish history. Indeed, as comparisons between Ukrainians and Irish would often tend to emphasize not only the “Russians being the Brits”, like would the comparison with Poles do. Several emphasized that Poles acted with Ukrainian like English nobles did with the Irish, therefore challenging Polish nationalist narratives. **Conclusions.** The article would confront comparisons coming from various sources – historiographical, press, testimonies, also in order to show how the comparisons between Ukraine and a “small nation” at the other side of Europe, and with their neighbor, could also forge their identity. Because since 2014 Ukrainians live a critical moment for the development of their national identity, a question that was concerning up to 40 % of Ukrainians in 2020, according to the Institute of Sociology of Sciences of Ukraine. Especially when nowadays, building itself against Russia, that most would assimilate to what Great Britain is to Ireland, Ukraine tends to grow closer to the West, to the EU, and thus, to Ireland and Poland.

Keywords: Ireland, transnational history, Poland, identification, historiography.

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ПРОТИСТОЯННЯ ІДЕНТИФІКАЦІЙ: УКРАЇНСЬКО-ПОЛЬСЬКІ ВЛАНІ СТОСУНКИ З ІРЛАНДСЬКОГО ПОГЛЯДУ XIX ст.

Анотація. Мета статті – висвітлити еволюцію ірландсько-польських та ірландсько-українських відносин через процеси ідентифікації. **Наукова новизна.** Ця проблема не є невідомою для істориків, незалежно від того, чи вони походять з Ірландії, Польщі чи України. Однак ці порівняння часто

ґрунтуються на українських та польських національних нарративах, які часто суперечать один одному, що підтверджується постійними історичними дискусіями – і все ж зв'язки обох країн з Ірландією рідко ставали об'єктом уваги істориків. У статті буде поставлено під сумнів те, які еволюціонували репрезентації ієрархії між поляками та Україною з середини XIX ст., від виникнення українських національних рухів до повномасштабного вторгнення в Україну у 2022 р. Однак через специфічну призму: порівняння польської та української історії (і суспільств) з історією Ірландії. Дійсно, порівняння між українцями та ірландцями часто підкреслює не лише те, що «росіяни – це британці», як це було б у випадку порівняння з поляками. Дехто підкреслював, що поляки поводитися з українцями так само, як англійські дворяни з ірландцями, тим самим кидаючи виклик польським націоналістичним нарративам.

Висновки. У статті розглянуті порівняння з різних джерел – історіографічних, преси, свідчень – також для того, щоб показати, як порівняння України з «малою нацією» на іншому кінці Європи, а також з їхнім сусідом, може також вплинути на їхню самоідентифікацію. Адже з 2014 р. українці переживають критичний момент для розвитку своєї національної ідентичності – питання, яке хвилювало до 40 % українців у 2020 р., згідно з даними Інституту соціології НАН України. Тим більше, що сьогодні, протиставляючи себе Росії, яку більшість асимілювала б так само, як Великобританія – Ірландії, Україна має тенденцію до зближення із Заходом, ЄС, а отже, з Ірландією та Польщею.

Ключові слова: Ірландія, транснаціональна історія, Польща, ідентифікація, історіографія.

Problem statement. “The Irish have traditionally identified with the Poles and their struggle for freedom and for their own national state. They are obvious parallels between two Catholic nations being oppressed by – and constantly rebelling against – an overwhelming colonial power of a different confession. But in fact, the Ireland-Ukraine pairing may be closer. As Ukrainians fight security forces on the barricades in Kiev and other Ukrainian cities, this history – and its parallels with Ireland – should be kept in mind” [1].

This is how Alexep Bayer is referring to at least two centuries of identification between Irish and Poles, dating from at least the first part of the 19th century [2]. Historical parallels are as ancient as history itself, since comparison is an instinctive process that you can find in Herodote's works [3, p. 9–18], a Greek historian known as the father of history. During the 19th century, the parallels were politically motivated by the total (and contemporary) loss of their sovereignty, respectively caused by the partition of Poland between Prussia (Germany after 1871), Austria-Hungary and Russia, and by the Anglo-Irish Act of 1801; as well as the common Catholic character of those two nations. Regarding Ukraine and Ireland, in the 19th century, the comparison relied on their common experience with the imperialism of their neighbors, the difficulty to preserve their own national language, and their relation with landowners. While historians such as Healy emphasized Poland and Ireland had few in common before the XIXth century [2, p. 9], Peter I considered the English subjugation of Ireland to be a fitting model for his plans regarding Ukraine: Irish-Ukrainian parallels date back therefore to at least the 18th century [4, p. 165]. Ireland has therefore the specificity to have been compared several times in the past with two countries which have themselves a long and complex mutual history, landing at the other side of Europe: Poland and Ukraine. Those are two nations whose national narratives, and thus martyrdom, sometimes contradict each other and historical controversies are still impacting their relations, despite cooperation since Ukraine independence in 1991 [5].

Research analysis. “There is no history other than compared”, declared the Polish historian Bronisław Geremek [6]. Those historical parallels were raised not only by contemporary actors, but by historians, including by those who did not intend to compare the histories of those countries. In 2023 and 2024 alone, Serhii Plokhyy, [7; 8] made references to Irish history in their histories of Ukraine written after the beginning of the war. Others rely on Irish recent political history to analyze the present of Ukraine and even its future [9]. The article would thus develop a large historiographical analysis of those comparisons; as well as of works by academics from the 19 and 20th century relying on historical parallels. In the domain of global history, some historians dedicated a large part of their career to relations between Ireland and Eastern Europe, including Polish-Irish, and Ukrainian-Irish relations. Ryishn Healy was already cited on Polish-Irish links, Gennadii Kazakevych dedicated himself to cultural transfers between Ireland and Ukraine [10] and to historical parallels [11]. Therefore, how could those two representations coexist?

The purpose of the article. The goal here is to study Polish-Ukrainian relations from an Irish perspective. How did the relations, especially the hierarchy between Poles and Ukrainians, were reflected into comparisons of those countries in Ireland? How did the relations between those three countries change after the 2022 invasion?

The statement of the basic material.

I) The Poles as the British and Ukrainians as the Irish before the 1991 independence

a) “Wirlandiya”: Ukrainians and faith in the Irish national movement

This is a blend word associating the word Irlandiya (Ireland in Ukrainian) with the word faith (wira), an expression allegedly used by Ukrainian peasants at the end of the 19th century [Smal-Stocky R. (1953, August 8) Influence of the Irish Spirit on Ukraine, *The Ukrainian Weekly*]. If other sources on this specific word are hard to find, Ukrainian intellectuals of the mid-century definitely expressed this faith in keeping such a strong national sentiment despite the way their language was declining, just like the Irish did [Doroshenko D. (1957) Survey of Ukrainian Historiography]. Volodymyr Antonovych, a founder of the Kievan History school, resorted to comparison with Ireland in his history classes since the beginning of his career. He was finding solace in how strongly the national feeling of the Irish was thriving despite the anglicization of the country – he had faith in Ireland: *Wirlandiya*. Despite his origins, as he was born in a family of the Polish nobility, he chose Ukraine early in his life. His early “confession” (*Moia Ispoved*), written after he cut ties with his Polish background and social circle, establishes clearly Poles as the oppressors of Ukrainians, and the moral responsibility they have towards them as consequences of the past:

“Polish nobles who live in the South Russian Region have only two choices before their conscience: either [...] return to the nationality once deserted by their ancestors, to compensate by constant work and charity [...] for all the evil they caused the people. The second choice, for him who lacked sufficient moral strength for the first, was to emigrate to Polish territory, inhabited by the Polish people, in order that there might be one less parasite [...]. I, of course, decided upon the first” [12]. He created an association of “khlopomany”, lovers of peasants, as part of this transition of Ukrainess – the assimilation of a nation with social class was clear. Regarding Russians, they were compared to the British “loyalists” in Ireland. Russians and Poles were therefore both seen as oppressors, despite the clear existing hierarchy between both [13]. And surprisingly enough, he qualified Ukraine as “Southern Russia” – he would use the word Little Russia until the 1880’s [14, p. 33–65].

This analysis of Polish-Ukrainian relations is shared by Andriy Sheptytsky, born three years later, also in a Polish *szlachta* family, and who cited Ireland dozens of times in his work as well [15]. An archbishop of L’viv, he stayed in History as a hero of Ukraine, proclaimed venerable by Pope Francis in 2015 [16]. The historian Ivan Rudnytsky cited those two figures, in one of his numerous essays on Modern Ukrainian History, as “members of the Polish minority in the Ukraine not wishing to be alien colonists in their native land [who] led the Ukrainian movement away from the Russian connection” along with another Ukrainian political activist, Viacheslav Lypynsky [17, p. 199–216]. And like the rest of the trio, Lypynsky made references to the Irish political landscape, here in connection to his own social class, hoping it would continue to exist if it serves his native country, as he hails Charles Stewart Parnell as an example of what Anglo-Irish gentry gave to Ireland [18, p. 451]. It supported Lypynsky’s thesis that the support of Polish historical nobility, here the “Right-bank polonized *szlachta*”, would be critical, even indispensable – Parnell is a living proof that there can be such leaders. In the same essay, Rudnytsky, citing Lypynsky, added that the Polish-Ukrainian aristocracy had offered Sheptytsky as a leader for the national liberation movement. In the meantime, Parnell was cited as a model for Ukraine by Andrei Zheliabov as well. Interestingly enough, Zheliabov was a member of the far-left movement Narodnaya Volya [18, p. 413], as he wondered in a letter to Drahomanov in 1880 “where are our Fenians, where is our Parnell?” while Lipinsky was a figure of Ukrainian conservative thought.

Less than 40 years later, Anglo-Irish gentry would give one of the main characters of the early 20th century fights for Irish Independence: the countess Constance Markievicz. Not only was she among the organizers of the 1916 Easter Rising in Dublin, remaining one of the most admired women in Ireland [19], but she also furnished in her letters first-hand observations of relations between Ukrainians and Poles, written during her visits to Polish in-laws in Ukraine.

b) Irish perception of Polish-Ukrainian relations before 1991

Constance Markievicz (1868–1927) is probably one of the most famous actresses of those triangular relations, since she was married to the Polish Count Kazimierz Dunin-Markievicz, whose family owned a real estate in the Vinnytsia Oblast. After their marriage in 1900, she spent several summers in the Markievicz family's village, Zhyvotivka, where she observed the relations between Ukrainian villagers who “spoke their own language” and the Markievicz, those dynamics she described in her letters. The language aspect possibly marked her because at that time, even in a historically Gaelic stronghold like Co. Sligo, the practice of Irish already largely declined. In one of her first prison letters, she emphasized that the Markievicz, like many landowners of the district, “were Poles” [20]. Those dynamics were however discontinued after the October Revolution, where Stasko Markievicz, the son of Kazimierz adopted by Constance, mentioned in a letter to Molly Gore-Booth that during the revolution, their “people” did not touch them, while Markievicz acknowledged in her prison letters that if she had to burn Lissadell, she would be ready to do so [21].

This is one of the most famous representations of Polish-Ukrainian relations by an Irish politician. Patrick Quigley wrote a trilogy on the Markievicz family published between 2011 and 2022, including two books about the transnational aspect of the family, and credited those trips for her politicization – while her epiphany is dated back from 1908, when she joined the Sinn Féin. Both her meetings with Ukrainians and Poles had an influence on her, would it be discussions with her mother in law about the Insurrection of January 1863 or the situation of Ukrainian peasants. If Markievicz herself came from a family of landowners, she had marxist views, for which she was nicknamed “the red countess”; and expressed more sympathies to those peasants than the rest of the Markievicz family [21, p. 29]. For instance, when she and Kazimierz passed next to a drunken peasant, Kazimierz convinced Constance that it was useless to help him. As she and Kazimierz were leaving Ukraine, they helped a local boy to flee the conscription of the Russo-Japanese War in 1905, (or prison), and she shouted to the policeman of the train station, “Moskal Swinja”, an insult common in Ukrainian nationalist circles [21, p. 30]. It is possible, but not explicit in sources, that if the situation of Poles influenced her independentist positions, further interaction with Ukrainians, and similarities with the social situation of Irish peasants, contributed to radicalize pre-existing socialist sensitivities. However, those analysis assimilating Ukrainian people's struggle to a class struggle, was not limited to the left, nor to Ukrainian liberation movement, but was also noted by Polish contemporary academics themselves.

c) Identifying with landowners: Ukraine at the center of a paradoxical Irish-Polish friendship

Franciszek Bujak was not a historian marxist, and was rather close to the PSL (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe, *Polish People's Party*): this is in his quality of agrarian historian that he associated social classes to ethnic groups, in accordance to their relations with land property. While Markievicz still considered Poles and Irish similarities in her works, Bujak heard about and deemed this friendship not possible, because Poles were structurally more similar to British landowners, a comparison Markievicz never made, but he only compared Irish and Ukrainians implicitly. In his *Galicja*, Poles were assimilated to landowners, while Ukrainians were working the land. This implies a consciousness even among Poles of this privileged position when compared to other people [22] In 1909–1910, he added that “The fate of the English in Ireland [...] is a bad prognosis for us” [22], “us” being the Poles.

Bujak continued to analyze Polish-Ukrainian relations once Poland was independent, in the interwar period, “paying attention to Polish totalitarianism” [23] and continue to compare the confrontation between the state and the peasants, a social class where Ukrainians were disproportionately represented, and peasant/nobility confrontations [24].

This implies a paradox regarding the place of Poland in the Irish Nationalist imagery: why would the Irish identify with landowners? These reasons behind this paradox were already addressed in historiography – Healy tried to answer it in her *Poland in the Nationalist Imagery*. This would be precisely because Poles had a long history, reigning over a large part of Europe, a historical legitimacy Irish nationalists wanted to claim. Moreover, they could claim that they suffered more than Poland, which would make the fact that the plight of Poland was more talked about in 19-th

century intellectual circles, unfair [2]. And the works of Healy, analyzing those relations on the background of Polish-Irish identification processes, was not the only historian from the British islands to emphasize that Poles and Ukrainians had relations of power at the disadvantage of the latter.

II) Ireland at the background of the study of Polish-Ukrainian relations after 1991

a) *Ukrainian and Polish relations as an element of comparisons for Irish historians*

After the independence of Ukraine on the 24th August of 1991, Poland and Ukraine became equals before the international laws, and the subsequent opening of archives allowed the development of Ukrainian history school locally, and its visibility abroad. Ukrainian and Polish historiography and their debates also influenced Irish historiography. Healy, a specialist of Poland, Ireland, and intra-European colonialism, therefore nuanced Polish narratives of martyrdom present in Irish imagery: “One might look at Polish attitudes towards the Kresy and its Ukrainian population, whether the advantage taken of Ruthenians by Polish leaders in Galicia or the contempt for Ukrainian aspirations to statehood” [2]. Liam Kennedy, self-described “revisionist” historian, compares Irish to Poles on the basis of their relations to history and “martyrology”: “Polish ultra-nationalists (self-styled “patriots”) have long celebrated Poland as the ‘martyr nation’ and a sense of “national martyrology” pervades much traditional writing on its history. This, of course, conveniently skips over anti-semitic pogroms and discrimination against ethnic minorities once Poland achieved independence after the First World War [including against Ukrainians]...” [25]. In order to analyze relations between Ireland and their history, comparisons to the history of others, Poles, Serbs, Ukrainians, was deemed important. Therefore, even in a book about Ireland, its nationalist legend and vision of History, references were made to the Ukrainian experience with a Polish independent government and how it challenged the representation of Poland as “the Christ of Nations”. To support this vision of Polish history, Kennedy cites “Beyond Martyrdom” [26], and probably, its chapter titled “Jews, Ukrainians, and Other Poles in the Interwar Period” [26, p. 126–143]. The book aims to challenge “Polish exceptionalism”, an approach Kennedy qualifies as “revisionism”. Even during the recent and praised welcoming of Ukrainian refugees, Porter nuanced this engagement “Sadly, racial categories have played an unconscious but very real role in facilitating assistance for Ukrainians, even as it has been denied to those coming from outside Europe” [27]. He said in his *Beyond Martyrdom* that a history that “failed to consider Jews and Ukrainians would be as flawed as a history of the United States that dealt exclusively with white English-speaking protestant” [26, p. 11]. A history that evolved a lot after the fall of the USSR.

b) *Comparison in post-Soviet historiography (1991–2014)*

After 1991, numerous books on Polish-Ukrainian relations were issued, not only because of Ukrainian independence, as Poland acquired as well considerably more freedom of research and access to archives [28]. Grzegorz Motyka established as early as 2000 a topology of historiography of Polish-Ukrainian relations: revisionist (in the sense meant by Liam Kennedy, challenging Polish stereotypes on Ukrainians), traditional, para-scientific and history established by Polish-Ukrainians. On the side of Ukraine, the study of Soviet crimes also durably impacted historiography: independence marked a new era in Holodomor research. The historian Victoria Malko had theorized four periods of Holodomor: a first (1930–1950) when sources were published outside of Ukraine, a second between the 1950’s and 1980’s, a third marked by the Ukrainian independence [29]. Bibliography on the Holodomor grew extensively with the possibility of accessing archives and working locally in Ukraine. The fourth and last historiographical period is when the transnational aspect of the Holodomor was developed the most, developing comparative perspectives and social history of ordinary citizens. This includes the first book comparing Holodomor and Gorta Mor (Ukrainian and Irish famine, respectively) was published in 2012, including a chapter on the part play by Polish intelligence service in contemporary investigations [30].

The progressive rapprochement between the “two Europe” allowed transnational initiatives to flourish. In 2004, Poland joined the European Union, and the same year, the Orange Revolution

represented a Ukrainian step towards Europe [31]. Some initiatives in Ukraine were coming from Ireland, and Constance Markievicz played a small part in it. In 2008, a room dedicated to her memory opened in Zhyvotivka [32], following the effort made by Patrick Quigley to develop ties not only with Poland, but also with Ukraine, a project he initiated in 2007 [33] but that was hard to put into practice due to the lack of funds, as the room was at first supposed to be a museum. However, for the last decade, the main obstacle to the development of Ukrainian history was not only poverty, but mostly the geopolitical situation of the country, which gave it more mediatic exposure abroad – and is directly linked to Ukraine’s aspiration to Europe. Everything began in November 2013, with the Revolution of Dignity, at the occasion of which Alexei Bayer had called to remember the parallels between Ireland and Ukraine [1].

c) The revolution of dignity and the war in Donbas: a turning point in the representation of Ukraine?

Alex Bayer continued to compare Ireland to Ukraine, developing his idea of a parallel in the context of the war in Donbas [34] and qualified Serbia as the real “little Russia”, in order to dissociate Ukraine and Russia [35]. The annexation of Crimea and the beginning of the war in Donbas the following month indeed represented in itself a serious crisis in the European political landscape. It contributed to give more visibility to Ukraine and its history, and to its European aspirations [36]. In the Irish and British press, one year after Euromaidan, this comparison was already here [37]. A newspaper confessed they first thought it was a “little difficulty” and qualified the Irish analogy as more relevant than comparison with the Nazi annexation with Sudetenland. If the war with Russia indeed did not begin with the full-scale invasion, but eight years before, 2022 definitely represents a new era in Ukrainian global history. Not only for the scale of the invasion, but for the massive exile of Ukrainians, including to Ireland and Poland. In Ireland, this led to the recognition of the Holodomor as a genocide on the 25th November of 2022, after the recognition of the invasion’s genocidal nature [38]: the historical plight of Ukrainians accessed to even more official recognition.

III) Polish–Ukrainian relations and Ireland after 2022

a) Bringing Polish and Ukrainian communities together in Ireland

In Ireland, it was possible to observe a trend similar to what happened in other European countries with an important Polish diaspora (France, Great Britain...): Polish organizations participated in the welcoming of Ukrainian refugees [39]. As of 2022, the country had a Polish community of approximately 110,000 members [40] and as of March 2024, 104.400 had arrived in Ireland and received temporary protections there. According to the Irish press, “This represents 2.4 per cent of the total 5.5 million Ukrainian refugees who have applied for temporary protection across Europe”, while Ireland has a population of appr. 5 million [41]. Graham Clifford, founder of Sanctuary Runners, recalled the “shared pain and shared resilience” of Polish and Ukrainian communities, and complained that the Irish authorities did not direct Ukrainians towards communities. Wojciech Białek, from the Cork-based group *Together Razem*, which despite its Polish name does not work only with the Polish community, complains that they were “invisible”. Clifford adds that “Ukrainians I’ve spoken to in Ireland tell me that given the choice, people fleeing their home country (who can’t go to another Ukrainian home) would prefer to go to the home of a Polish family because of cultural, dietary, and linguistic similarities. It makes complete sense.” [39]. To emphasize that it is a reciprocal feeling, he quotes one of her Polish friends: “It’s like the relationship between Irish people and Scottish people”.

In 2024, on the Immigrant Council of Ireland’s website, *Together Razem* is cited as a charity to donate to help Ukrainians, just like the Polish Humanitarian Action [42]. Larysa Gerasko, Ukrainian ambassador to Ireland, even declared in 2022 that the country was in the forefront of support and assistance for Ukrainians, along with Poland [43]. This ambassador also closely cooperates with the ambassador of Poland to Ireland to oppose the war, first with Anna Sochańska, [44], then with Arkady Rzegocki [45].

To what extent is this cooperation of Poles and Ukrainians in Ireland reflected in academic activity?

b) The Ukraine-Polish rapprochement: A historiographical evolution?

It was in September 2022 that the first anthology of papers comparing Ukraine and Ireland was published, under the direction of Stephen Velychenko, a historian who compared British and Russian imperialism as early as 1997 [46, pp. 413–441]. However, one should note it is based on an international scientific conference held in November 2019, so way before the full-scale invasion [47]. Interestingly, this work includes a chapter about one of the most (if not the most) controversial aspects of Ukrainian-Polish relations – the OUN/UPA, responsible for up to 100,000 Polish deaths, comparing it with the IRA. This is not the first time a historian made the comparison. In the 1988 *Ukraine: A history*, that his author Orest Subtelny intended to be a definitive history of Ukraine, the praised historian not only compared it to IRA but also to Polish underground activities of Józef Piłsudski:

“Its members believed that they were waging a national-liberation struggle by revolutionary means, much like the Irish in the anti-English Sinn Fein and Piłsudski’s pre-war anti-Russian underground organization. The immediate objectives of such tactics were to persuade Ukrainians that resistance was possible and to keep Ukrainian society in a state of “constant revolutionary ferment”. However, we should wait 30 further years for this comparison to be deepened, despite (or because of?) its paradoxical and controversial nature, in a dedicated article, here by Oleksandr Zaitsev. The article defends the comparison in spite of major ideological differences (one right wing, the other left wing) on the ground that Ukrainians did it themselves, and that both movements advocated violence as a means of attaining political independence. However, the IRA never resorted to ethnic cleansing, contrary to the UPA. Zaitsev cites it as a difference (p. 478–480), and precises that the number of victims during Polish-Ukrainian and Soviet-Ukrainian conflicts were hundreds of times higher than during the Irish War of Independence. Robert Bideleux, specialist of genocide and post-colonialism, praised the lucidity and incisivity of the article [48, p. 413–440]. In the same book, Ryishn Healy [47, p. 412] compared political assassinations in Ireland and Ukraine between 1880 and 1939, including that after 1918 “The Polish state also played its part in sustaining Ukrainian nationalist violence”.

Piotr Wróbel, a Polish-Canadian historian, published a review of this comparative study in the *Canadian Slavonic Papers*. A review that begins with the political context: “Russia’s massive invasion of Ukraine put Ukraine at the center of global affairs”. Poland needs to understand its relations with Ukraine. According to Wróbel, “The future of Europe, if not of the entire world, depends on the outcome of this war. It is essential, therefore, to be familiar with the past and present of Ukraine and to put it in the context of global history. The book under review is an excellent step in this direction” [49, p. 536–538].

In the Irish academic landscape, the impact of the war extends to other departments than History. Polish organizations were recognized as being a critical stimulus for Research on National Security in Ireland after the invasion of Ukraine [50, p. 121–142]. Poland thus even played its part as an ally of Ukraine in the Security studies context.

After 2022 (and to a lesser extent after 2014), the debate on decolonizing Slavic Studies in Western universities gained in importance, and this includes Ireland. The country is small, and there is only one center of Slavonic studies in Ireland, at Trinity College, Dublin, with smaller units elsewhere. A research conducted by Polish scholars offers comparisons between 2019 and 2023 to see the evolution of the center, still centered around Poland and Russia: “Thus, the Polish-Russian focus, in terms of the first component at least, illustrates the importance of Russian Studies, along with Polish Studies [only existing in Trinity College], with new curricular possibilities within Ukrainian Studies to be yet developed [in Ireland]” [51]. In 2023, Ukrainian modules began to be offered. Therefore, the Polish language had more visibility than Ukrainian in the academic landscape. The question of language study is actually so important that in Ireland, numerous Ukrainian refugees began learning Irish. One of them, Khadizha, said it is precious and that like Poles, Irish would understand them better: “people would understand me here, better than any other country in Europe. Because most of them were always the aggressors; most of them still have colonies” [Wilson J. (2022, October 26) Why Ukrainian refugees are learning Irish].

The famous historian Yaroslav Hrytsak, author for instance of *Essays in Ukrainian History: Making of Modern Ukrainian Nation* published in 1996, stated that “Ukrainians began at the Scots and finished at the Irish” [52]. It is also that the Ukrainian people, affirming itself and

preparing resistance, is taking inspiration from both Irish and Polish nations, using their cultural rallying cries to win their fights.

c) The defense of Ukrainian nation and identity: parallels with Ireland – and Poland – after 2022

Ukrainian fighting culture is taking inspiration from around the world, including from Poland and Ireland. The motto “za wolność naszą i waszą” (for our freedom and theirs), one of the unofficial mottos of Poland, became associated with Ukraine, including for Ukrainian supporters abroad. It was not only used by Polish officials: it is the name of a French association supporting Ukraine, or by the association “Friends of Europe”. As early as 2020, it was used by the Ukrainian civil Society in support of Belarus demonstrations against Lukashenko. In 2022, “Go on home Russian soldiers” was sung by Ukrainian Celtic group The Shamrocks, based on Go on Home British Soldiers, a song composed during “The Troubles”, (conflict in Northern Ireland between the 1960’s and 1998) by Tommy Skelly and popularized by The Wolfe Tones. The song exists in versions sung by several Irish bands and artists, such as Hamish Seamus. This kind of cultural transfer echoes inspiration taken from both countries at the middle of the 19th century by the same actors who would be forging Ukraine’s national movement. However, a major difference is that now those references to Irish and Polish fights against neighboring imperialism when addressing Ukrainian resistance are much more widespread outside of Ukraine. The popularity of the Polish expression “for your liberty and ours” to express support for Ukraine, sometimes reworded as “for their liberty and ours”, is symbolical of this shift: it is possible that the invasion of Ukraine will play a similar part in the geopolitical landscape that the partitions of Poland played two centuries ago.

The conclusions. To conclude, how did the relations of power between Poles and Ukrainians, were reflected into the popular representations in Ireland? How did the relations between those three countries change after the 2022 invasion?

Early comparisons between Ukraine and Ireland compared Russia to the British Empire. Comparisons which complexified it by implying that Polish nobles acted with Ukrainians similarly added nuances- as Poland was itself victims of Russian imperialism. After Polish independence, UPA, which was particularly anti-Polish, took inspiration from the IRA – reasserting the idea that Ukraine fought “both sides”. After 1991, when both Ukraine and Poland were independent, they acquired at the same time the full possibility to read their history independently from Soviet influence, and also, to have a historical dialogue.

The visibility given to Ukraine by the ongoing war impacts its place in global history: even Polish-Ukrainian feuds were publicly exposed. The invasion is the first of those massive upheavals that is not contemporary with comparable changes in Poland, but Poland remains deeply concerned. Despite the war not being the first in Europe after the Second World War, as this would ignore the wars in Yugoslavia in the 1990’s, making this qualification controversial, the full-scale invasion was qualified as such to emphasize on the extraordinary tension existing in Europe. It therefore shares with the partition its extraordinary aspect, contributing to the omnipresence of the afflicted country in the public debate. This includes debates on purely Irish topics then again, arguments appealing to comparisons with Ukrainian History, considering that reunification of Ireland is still awaited and considered possible. It was even recently described as closer than ever [53]. The part those two “extraordinary” events played on the Europe political scene and in debates about Russian imperialism would deserve further comparison.

Those questions are not limited to the field of History; neither Irish nor Ukrainian history are finished. The comparison is used by theoreticians of international relations to theorize a possible end for the Ukrainian war, and a possible future of the Polish-Ukrainian alliance. In addition, in the context of the war, cultural transfers, inspiration taken from Irish political culture are infusing cultural production in torn-war Ukraine. Parallels with, making it therefore a centuries-long trend, which dates back from the XIXth century and the Polish partition era.

The Ukrainian historian Yaroslav Hrytsak declared in November 2023 that “Ukrainian history may be reduced to a simple sentence: Ukrainians started as the Scots and ended up like the Irish” [52]. In the same article, Hrytsak pointed out that Polish nationalism, the “only real nationalism in the Russian Empire” was as influential in the East as the French Revolution was in the West, and

contributed to this transformation towards more dissent, a stronger national movement. To put it in other words, it is Polish nationalism that contributed to “turn the Ukrainians into the Irish”, and this, while Poland and Ireland were mutually contributing to forge their own national movements.

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