

CHARLES UNIVERSITY IN PRAGUE
Faculty of Social Sciences Institute of International Studies
Supervisor's Review

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Program: Balkan, Eurasian and Central European Studies

Title: *Ukrainian national identity under Polish rule in the interwar period (1918-1939).*

Reviewed by: Doc. PhDr. Jiří Vykoukal, CSc. (Institute of International Studies)

CONTENT AND AIM OF THE THESIS:

Dissertation deals with relations between Poles and Ukrainians in the interwar Poland vis a vis the problem of cohabitation between Polish state and the Ukrainian community in South-Eastern Poland. The author studies how the Polish authorities implemented the policy of “polonization” aiming at assimilation of Ukrainians, which concept of the Ukrainian national identity was behind this policy and why this policy basically failed. To find answers she defines three basic hypotheses saying that Ukrainian national identity was not respected by the Polish state, but still developed by Ukrainians themselves because of brutality of assimilation policy and the lack of positive perspectives linked to potential transfer from Ukrainian to the Polish identity.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:

Research questions are integrated into the methodological context based on the concept of national identity (A. Smith is quoted as the main inspiration) which I accept with great hesitation because of the way through which is constructed. Beyond all discussion about its sense identity is still an analytical tool and it's hard to accept when after relatively extensive explanations and delimitations of what each thinks about it the author says (p. 11): “Thus, I consider it important to take all the main parameters of all concepts and try to project them on the topic of my work”. Firstly different concepts have different roots and features and it's hard to make them equal or same. Secondly this will not and cannot work because we do not have clearly defined tool (method) but just an eclectic mixture of rather intuitively used approaches. Thirdly, with this approach identity can change into whatever author wants it to be which happens in the text. Identity is employed as a “common” or “loose” term which methodological validity is low. This leads to the loss of coherent framework of dissertation which changed into a set of narrative sequences/chapters.

The other thing I would oppose is a simplified picture of how the Poles perceived Ukrainians. Dominating (in the text) statement that “The Poles had the illusion that Ukrainians are just underdeveloped Poles” represents just one of the then existing options. Other views were quite convinced that Ukrainians are Ukrainians with specific language, ethnic and religious background (regardless of the political praxis and methods used against Ukrainians). I also think that the usage of terms like “occupation”, “citizen” etc. should be used with respect to historical context etc.

From formal point of view I miss more extensive comments on sources – the list of Ukrainian authors (p. 10-11) says nothing about the nature of they were thinking about identity and other problems, the same can be said about “Other sources” dealing with “accounts on Ukrainian national identity by contemporaries” where even none of the names of these contemporaries is mentioned. Also referring to sources is strange because of the lack of pagination – how the reader can verify or find the information in the source without the page information.

PRESENTATION AND STYLE:

Presentation and style are relatively clear but the text is sometimes enigmatic due the lack of already mentioned coherent concept - thus Lviv was grundet the Polish city historically (? p. 25).

COMMENTS:

Lot of mistakes: interwar Poland was not a “Commonwealth” but just a republic, Commonwealth is the name for the old Polish-Lithuanian Union (p. 6, 16); it’s hard to speak about Ukrainians in Poland in general as “foreign citizens” when there is no Ukrainian state (except for the Soviet Ukraine (p. 7); “the main scholastic thought” (scholastic refers to medieval philosophy (p. 9); Treaty of Riga was signed in 1921, not in 1920 (16); often lower cases used in words like polish, ukrainian; pacification is not a synonym for appeasement (p. 50); correct name of the Polish Minister of Internal Affairs (rather Interior) is Felicjan Sławoj Składkowski, by the way, in 1930 he was not a minister of foreign affairs (p. 51); deputy is a better term for members of the parliament than ambassadors (p. 51); name of assassinated minister of interior was Pieracki, not Peyracki etc. etc.

QUESTIONS TO DISCUSS:

1. Were there in the period before 1939 representatives of Ukrainian community willing to cooperate with the Polish authorities?
2. Who on the Polish side represented the opinion (1930s) that areas settled by the Ukrainians should be given autonomy?

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Dissertation meets formal demands for an M.A. dissertation.
Proposed assessment: very good **(2)** - good **(3)**.

Date: Prague, June 12, 2017

Signature