Struggling for peace: understanding Polish-Ukrainian coexistence in southeast Poland (1943-2007)
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From ethnic cleansing to affirmative action
Exploring Poland’s struggle with its Ukrainian minority
1944-1989*

The fundamental value of our [Polish] nation lies hidden in the deep, humanistic meaning of the Marxist slogan: “There can be no free nation, when it suppresses other nations”.

Aleksander Sław (1958b: 31)

Introduction

Bearing in mind that the term ethnic cleansing has become commonplace in descriptions of genocidal practices as in, for example, former Yugoslavia, this chapter will address another side of ethnic cleansing: the implementation of an unparalleled process of demographic engineering in the former Polish People’s Republic during the immediate postwar years. Following Bookman (1997), the term “demographic engineering” is used to refer to the organized efforts by Poland’s postwar political leadership aimed at altering the relative sizes of minority and majority populations in the quest for political control. Even though Poland’s political leaders did not shun using violence in their desire to reduce the size of minority populations on Polish territory, genocide was not on their agenda.1 They instead relied on alternative strategies: boundary changes, forced population transfers, economic pressure and forced assimilation. Recent scholarship refers to the state-initiated expulsion (forced transfer from one country to another) and deportation (forced resettlement to distant regions within a country) of Poland’s Ukrainians from Poland’s southeastern territories between 1944 and 1947 as ethnic cleansing (cf. Hann 1996; Kersten 1996; Misiło 1999; Motyka 1999; Snyder 2003; van der Plank 2004). In principle,

* Accepted for publication in Nations and Nationalism.
1 While Bookman (1997) classifies genocide as an altogether different phenomenon, in my view it should be considered as one of several methods political leaders may deploy in their demographic engineering projects.
these strategies were designed to ‘purify’ a territory, not a population: they were not inspired by racial, religious or ethnic hatred, and were part of a pragmatic and, at the time, not uncommon solution to establishing stable nation-states.

The use of the label “Ukrainian” suggests consensus concerning the ethnic and national identity of the people that once inhabited the south-easternmost parts of Poland. While these people had in common that most of them were not Roman Catholic nor spoke Polish as their native tongue, their identity has been much contested since the era of nationalism (cf., Magocsi 1978; Hann 1993a; Zięba 1995a; Hann and Magocsi 2005). Nevertheless, in the immediate postwar years the official name given to the various ethnic groups—including the Lemkos, Boiks, and Hutsuls—was “Ukrainian” and their removal was part of a policy aimed at the permanent resolution of the so called “Ukrainian problem”. In order to avoid anachronisms, I will use the term Ukrainian in much the same way as Poland’s communist leaders did in their times, while acknowledging the fact that the term Ukrainian in and of itself is quite problematic. For similar reasons I will refer to Ukrainians not as an “ethnic group” but as a “national minority”, as it was as members of the Ukrainian “national minority” (mniejszość narodowa) that designated “Ukrainians” could refer to their legal status in People’s Poland, irrespective of their linguistic, religious, or ethnic backgrounds.

The ambiguous attitude of Poland’s communist leadership towards Poland’s minority populations, on the one hand violent and severely repressive, on the other allowing for controlled liberties and offering protection for the country’s downtrodden minority populations, will be the main focus of this chapter. Despite the fact that the future of the country was willfully built on the massive expulsion and deportation of almost all its national minorities during the 1940s, in the decades that followed the communist leadership promoted a policy that today would be termed “affirmative action”. This policy was characterized by an effort to redress discrimination as well as the effects of such discrimination in earlier periods. Therefore, active measures were taken to ensure equal social and economic opportunities for minorities. The background of the wavering communist policies towards Poland’s Ukrainian minority will be discussed in three parts. First, the conditions that gave rise to a policy of ethnic cleansing are explored. Next, it is discussed how, in an attempt of the Polish Communist Party to include all members of the Ukrainian minority into Polish citizenship, the policy shifted to one of affirmative action. Finally, it is demonstrated how these seemingly contradictory policies were prompted by the same underlying political motivations.
Trials and tribulations: ‘Polish ways’ of solving the ‘Ukrainian Problem’

In the formative years of the Polish People’s Republic, from the installation of the Polish Committee of National Liberation in July 1944 to the first ‘free’ elections in January 1947, it was political nationalism rather than socialist internationalism that reigned supreme in Polish politics. Paradoxically, the nationalist policy adopted by the postwar communist regime revived the nationalist ideology of “Poland for the Poles” championed by the prewar Sanacja regime. What is more, in the process of building a one-nation state, the communist regime used the racial administrative infrastructure left by the Nazi regime, such as the German Kennkarte (distinguishing Poles from non-Poles) and German concentration camps (serving as convenient locations for the collective punishment of minority groups). The postwar communist regime eventually relinquished the principle most treasured by the prewar Polish Communist Party, namely that of citizenship and equal rights for all. It was in this era of Polish ‘real-socialism’, that the socialist doctrine of proletarian internationalism offered little legal protection to those minorities targeted for expulsion.

Just how ‘Polish’ the expulsion policies regarding Poland’s Ukrainian minority were has been questioned by a number of scholars. The Polish historians Grzegorz Motyka (1999) and Marek Jasiak (2001) assert that in all decisive phases directives came from Moscow, or at least that Moscow’s orders were unambiguous and open to single interpretation. Similarly, the American historian Timothy Snyder (1999) signals the decisive impact of Soviet trained officials in the implementation of Poland’s expulsion and deportation policies. Snyder (2003), along with the Polish historian Krystyna Kersten (2001), also points at the larger geopolitical context in which Poland’s postwar expulsion and deportation policies took shape. It may have been Stalin who first conceived of an ethnically homogenous Poland free of “irredentist” national minorities, but it was not without the consent of the Western Allied Powers that he embarked on an impressive demographic engineering project, including the establishment of new ethnographic borders and the transfer of millions of people. This is clear from the following excerpt of a speech by Winston Churchill during a debate on Poland’s postwar future in the House of Commons on 15 December 1944 (in Kersten 2001: 78):

The Poles are free, so far as Russia and Great Britain are concerned, to extend their territory, at the expense of Germany, to the west […] The transference of several millions of people would have to be effected from the east to the west or north, as well as the expulsion of the Germans […] For expulsion is the method that, so far as we have been able to see, will be the most satisfactory and lasting. There will be no mixture of populations to cause endless trouble […] A clean sweep will be made.
At the time Churchill delivered his speech, the Soviet-imposed Polish Committee of National Liberation and the Soviet government had already secretly agreed on the westward shift of Poland’s eastern and western border with 150 miles, thereby removing 85 percent of Poland’s largest national minority—Ukrainians—without the need of having to relocate them (Snyder 1999). The removal of the remainder was secured with the so-called “repatriation” charters between Poland, the Ukrainian, Byelorussian, and Lithuanian Soviet Republics in September 1944. The charters mandated the voluntary “evacuation” of all Ukrainians, Byelorussians, Russians and Lithuanians living on Polish territory to the Soviet Union, and of all Poles and Jews—having had Polish citizenship in September 1939—living on Soviet territory to Poland (Misiło 1996). The new ethnographic border was approved by the western allied powers during the Yalta and Potsdam conferences in 1945, as were the population transfers from east to west and from west to east.

The unanimous consensus among the Allied powers that a peaceful Europe could only be attained on the basis of stable, ethnically homogenous nation states also impacted Poland’s domestic attitudes toward the minority populations. The sanctioning of population transfers rendered expulsion policies not just into appropriate, but also into legitimate, political means. The opinions expressed by Polish party officials during a conference in July 1945 in which the future of Poland’s Ukrainians was discussed are indicative for the way the expulsion of Ukrainians from Poland, as of other national minorities, had been accepted as a necessary evil. “We consider it of utmost importance that we live in mutual agreement”, prompted the head of the Ministry of Public Administration, but he added that any Ukrainian demands (such as their full participation in Poland’s political and economic life) could be met only “after the conclusion of the population transfers”. Another delegate judged: “Even though the Citizens are unanimous about their wish to stay here, I don’t think this will be possible. Having agreed with the Soviet Union to establish an ethnographic frontier, we have a tendency to be a nation state, and not a state of nationalities.” His last words were hard to misinterpret: “We do not want to harm anybody, but we do wish to solve the problem of [our] national minorities.”

In the period between October 1944 and June 1946 an estimated 480,000 people classified as Ukrainians were put on transport to the Ukrainian Soviet Republic. These numbers are low compared to those of other expelled contemporaries: Poles (1.7 million) and Germans (8.1 million). Map 3.1 summarizes these as well as voluntary population movements in the first decade after World War II. However, the expulsion of Poland’s Ukrainians from their native villages and towns stands out in one important respect: the military resistance of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) to the state enforced resettlement policies. As UPA militancy was answered with state military violence, the

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Ukrainian question increasingly became, more than anything else, a military question. When “voluntary” evacuation to the Soviet Ukrainian Republic turned out to be ineffective, Polish and Soviet army officers ordered the forceful expulsion of all Ukrainian civilians from their native territories. And when the “repatriation” charters approached their end in May 1947, Poland’s leadership came up with another military solution: the deportation of the residual Ukrainian population to distant regions within the country during the so-called military Operation Vistula (Akcja “Wisła”).

Poland’s communist leadership typically propagated Operation Vistula as a necessary measure to once and for all smother Ukrainian militancy threatening to endanger the safety and the building of a socialist People’s Republic. This “military necessity” argument was fundamental to a political establishment that consisted largely of veteran officers who had

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**Map 3.1 Population movements, Poland 1944-1952**

Source: Based on the Historical Atlas of East Central Europe (Magocsi 1998: 164-8).
served their time in partisan armies during the Second World War. Firstly, they were particularly unsympathetic to UPA soldiers who during World War II had not just lent their services to the extremely brutal Nazi regime, but had also engaged in the mass killings of Polish civilians (chapter 2). Secondly, they knew from experience that a guerrilla war could only be won by drastic military measures. Indeed, Operation Vistula did bring the military defeat of the UPA in Poland. “Once most Ukrainians had been resettled,” writes Snyder, “resistance was not only next to impossible, it was essentially pointless” (2003: 200). The question remains, however, to what extent the UPA posed a real threat to Poland’s political establishment to require the physical removal of an entire civilian population. Moreover, if it were true that Operation Vistula had a great military urgency, why was it implemented so late (in April 1947, more than two years after Nazi Germany’s military defeat) and so hesitantly by Poland’s communist leadership?

Kersten (1996) points at the fact that Operation Vistula was implemented at a time when military control by the Polish Army in southeast Poland had increased and UPA military activity had decreased. Jasiak (2001) and Motyka (1999) demonstrate that there was a significant lapse in military attention to the issue of UPA militancy in the first years of the existence of the People’s Republic. Instead, up to spring 1947 much of Poland’s military force had been directed to the elimination of the Polish anti-communist underground and to the meticulous preparations of the orchestrated elections of January 1947. This being the case, Motyka argues, with all its forces assembled, the Polish army could have easily defeated the already highly dispersed and decimated UPA, without having to deport an entire civilian population, let alone those who did not sympathize with the Ukrainian underground and who did not identify as Ukrainians. Finally, during the enforcement process, Operation Vistula instead of strengthening the “relative peace” in the region contributed to an intensification of violence and lawlessness. This can be seen from Table 3.1, which summarizes for the Rzeszów province the statistics of all reported offences committed by “unknown civil bands” and by “hostile political elements” in the months preceding, during, and following Operation Vistula. The occurrences of violence and arson significantly rose during the operation. Even after the completion of the operation most statistics remain significantly higher than before its implementation.

If not military logic, what else was the reason behind Operation Vistula? Recent scholarship has shown that Operation Vistula, besides an attempt to “resolve the Ukrainian problem once and for all” (General Mossor quoted in Misiło 1993: 93), was an attempt to resolve another, much more urgent problem: the agonizing lack of political legitimacy of a Soviet imposed and, by January 1947, falsely elected Polish communist government. “The Polish communist regime stood to gain in popularity by identifying itself with the Polish nation, by combating ‘Ukrainian nationality’”, writes Snyder (1999: 111). “The attempt at hegemony over the idea of the nation had been the major goal of communist propaganda
from 1943; the genius of excluding the UPA from the national amnesty of February 1947, of prosecuting Ukrainian partisans under different laws than Polish ones, and finally of Operation “Wisła” in summer 1947, was that such actions defined that national community starkly and plainly.” Kersten (2001) likewise argues that the expulsion of non-Poles from Poland encouraged many Poles to cooperate with the Polish Committee of National Liberation and the successive communist governments, even those who might otherwise have been negatively disposed towards the communists. The nationalization of Polish communism gave rise to a contradictory picture of the new regime: “it was seen as a government forcibly imposed by a foreign power, but one that was nonetheless taking care of Poland’s national aspirations” (Kersten 2001: 80).

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Table 3.1 Criminal and politically inspired offences committed immediately before, during, and after Operation Vistula in the Rzeszów province</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Before</strong> (February-April 1947)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Violence</strong></td>
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<td>Manslaughter</td>
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<td>Robbery by assault and attacks on militia stations and stations of the Secret Services</td>
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<td>Injuries</td>
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<td>Disappearances</td>
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<td>Kidnappings</td>
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<td><strong>Arson</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Accidental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houses and farms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridges; mills; oil pits</td>
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<tr>
<td>Forests (in ha)</td>
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*Sources: Monthly Reports by the Socio-political Department in Rzeszów to the Ministry of Public Administration. Centralne Archiwum MSWiA. February to June 1947: Sprawozdanie sytuacyjne miesięczne, MAP 112, July to October 1947, MBP 140.*

The timing of Operation Vistula was faultless. It was implemented after the falsified parliamentary elections (January 1947), thus distracting the Polish population from the bad press the communist government was receiving in and outside the country, and after the declaration of an amnesty for political opponents (February 1947), which marked the end
of the Polish underground but left the Ukrainian underground (being excluded from the amnesty) as a major threat to state security. When on 28 March 1947 General Świerczewski was killed in an ambush by UPA armed forces, the state authorities used this as a pretext to start massive deportation of the Ukrainian civilian population. Following Świerczewski’s death, a massive propaganda campaign told soldiers and ordinary citizens about the dire necessity of the final “cleansing” (oczyszczenie) of Poland’s southeastern territories from “raiding fascist Ukrainian troops”. Stressing the “shameful” partnership of the Ukrainian and Polish underground forces, the propaganda was instrumental in discrediting all—Polish and Ukrainian—opponents of the communist establishment at once; as enemies to a “democratic” regime, they were the ones who hindered Poland’s resurrection from the ruins of the war (Zajączkowski 2003: 185-6). State propaganda did not stop with the termination of Operation Vistula in August 1947. As matters stand, Operation Vistula became one of the most exploited political maneuvers in the history of People’s Poland (Zięba 1995b), comparable in scale and scope maybe to the massive anti-Semitic campaign begun by Poland’s communist government in 1967, which resulted in the departure of an estimated 15-20,000 Jews from Poland (Pankowski 2008).

The answer to the question why Operation Vistula was implemented in the spring of 1947 lies in the above-depicted political realities. Poland’s communists were simply not ready to implement a military campaign like Operation Vistula any time earlier. In the process of pursuing the completion of their new task—the ethnic homogenization of the Polish People’s Republic—the political limits of what was tolerable and what not, as well as the political balance of what was required and what was desired, had to be explored and tested at every step along the way. Come what may, all actions first had to be explained and justified to, next to being accepted by, the higher and lower political cadres. How difficult and painstaking this process of political delegation and decision-making was is clear from the example of Poland’s Lemkos. The Lemkos, who linguistically and culturally were related to their Ukrainian neighbors and had a varied (Rusyn, Ukrainian, or Polish) national identity, were one of the ethnic groups targeted for expulsion. But whereas the state authorities had shown no leniency toward members of the Ukrainian community, their approach toward the Lemkos was much more circumspect. The political assertiveness of the Lemko community on the one hand, and the political indecisiveness of the communist leadership on the other, resulted in an endless tug of war between the local, provincial and central authorities regarding the expulsion of the Lemkos.

The increased use of military force by Polish troops in the Krosno and Sanok districts during the first half of 1946 was reason for a number of local communities to issue a

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3 The timing, as well as the suspicious circumstances of Świerczewski’s death, has led some historians to suggest that maybe his death was not accidental but part of a preplanned chain of events (cf. 1992; Motyka 1999; Jasiak 2001).
From ethnic cleansing to affirmative action

A petition signed by the village headmen (soltysi) of the Komańcza district states that “things are happening here, which are blatantly incompatible with the words spoken by His Highest Citizen the Marshal of Poland, but which are carried out by divisions of the Polish Army.”

The petitioners argue that since local inhabitants do not identify themselves as Ukrainians, consider themselves loyal Polish citizens, and are as much attached to the Polish soil—on which in fact they have lived for centuries—as are their Polish neighbors, great injustice is done to them if they are forced to leave the country. The petitioners dismiss the policy of “Ukrainization”, which disregards their status as native-born citizens of Poland and their “proven loyalty” to the Polish State, as well as the policy of “collective responsibility”, which first and foremost “hits the innocent” rather than punishes the guilty.

A second petition written by the village inhabitants of Komańcza states “we therefore kindly request […] a generous and immediate withdrawal of our compulsory resettlement to the East, foreign to us in every respect.”

The residents in the Komańcza district were not alone in their protest. Residents of the Szczawne district and from the town Krosno sent similar petitions to the central authorities. The Krosno petition was signed by Polish citizens who, in emphasizing that they had always lived and worked “in best harmony” with their “Lemko brethren”, argued that the “terror and barbarity” that was being exacted on peaceful civilians would remain as a “black stain” (czarna plama) on the pages of Poland’s history.

The petitions did touch a chord with the central authorities. At stake was the political legitimacy of the communist leadership claiming the control over a ‘new and democratic’ Poland. In April 1946, General Secretary of the Polish Communist Party Władysław Gomułka once more decreed

4 Petition by the village headmen of the Komańcza district addressed to the Minister of National Defence Marshal of Poland M. Żymierski, Komańcza, 16 February 1946 (in Miśło 1999: 45).
5 Ibid. (1999: 46).
6 Petition by the inhabitants of the Komańcza district addressed to the chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Polish People’s Republic, the Minister of National Defence, the Minister of Justice, the principals of the Rzeszów province and the Sanok district, Komańcza, 18 February 1946 (in Miśło 1999: 47-8).
7 Petition by the inhabitants of the Szczawne district addressed to the chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Polish People’s Republic E. Osóbka-Morawski, Szczawne, 19 February 1946; Joint letter by the citizens of Krosno addressed to the General Secretary of the Polish Communist Party Władysław Gomułka, Krosno, 29 March 1946 (Miśło 1999).
8 Quoted in Miśło (1999: 75, 77).
that the use of any force in the resettlement of the Lemkos was “strictly forbidden”. In a response to the petitions, the Polish plenipotentiary for evacuation Józef Bednarz explained his new dilemma before the Vice Minister of Public Administration. “I have no evidence in favor of the claim made by the Lemko petitioners that they helped liberate the Polish nation from the Nazi occupier, nor for their current loyalty with respect to the Government of National Unity”, writes Bednarz. “But their reproach that the evacuation in the Sanok district [...] looses its voluntary character with the active involvement of divisions of the Polish Army, makes perfect sense—still, from the technical point of view, and in the light of the struggle against Ukrainian nationalist troops, the [army’s] withdrawal will undoubtedly harm the resettlement operation.”

To cover up for his uncertainty regarding the status of the Lemkos, Bednarz requested an expert opinion from the general secretary of the Polish Academy of Science in Kraków, who concluded that over the past few decades the Lemkos “did not consider themselves as Poles, but as part of the Rusyn nation”, and that in the last years “Ukrainian influences” had gained increased importance. “During the elections Lemkos never brought out a vote for Polish candidates [...] nor did they resist Nazi occupation. Therefore, if they now claim to be Poles, they do so only because they want to stay in Poland. This Polishness may be considered one hundred percent situational, sincere maybe among the few [Lemko] Roman Catholics.” Even though this opinion had the potential of supporting state policy, the vice minister of Public Administration Władysław Wolski dismissed it as irrelevant. Sophisticated, hair-splitting commentaries had become redundant because by that time the engineering project had already gained its own momentum. In Wolski’s view, the central administration should busy itself “solely with the technical side of the resettlement operation” and see to it that “the evacuation of the Lemkos is carried out according to general principles.” In other words, the necessity of the resettlement of the Lemkos was beyond doubt and the main task of the Ministry of Public Administration was to carry out the operation as quickly and efficient as possible, if necessary with force.

To that effect, and in order to fulfill the quota requirements demanded by their superiors, the provincial and district authorities took refuge in the strategy of “voluntary


10 Letter by the chief plenipotentiary for evacuation of the Ukrainian population J. Bednarz to the Vice Minister of Public Administration Wł. Wolski concerning the petitions sent by the Komańczca and Szczawne districts, Lublin, 1 April 1946 (in Misio 1999: 92).

11 Letter of the general secretary of the Polish Academy of Science T. Kowalski to the chief plenipotentiary for evacuation of the Ukrainian population J. Bednarz, Kraków 16 April 1946 (in Misio 1999: 103).
constraint” (dobrowolny przymus): while acknowledging the clause of “voluntariness” of the resettlement treaty, they sanctioned the active involvement of the Polish Army in the resettlement operation.\(^\text{12}\) This approach solved the problem to a degree, but not entirely. The lack of clear instructions regarding the issue of who was to be deported and who not—besides the decision that those Lemkos who declared themselves as Poles and who were loyal to the Polish state could stay—resulted in chaos and abuses. “The evacuation operation has failed”, concluded the principal of the Kraków province in a letter of 13 June 1946, “but the hundred percent inclusion of the Lemkos will not guarantee any success either” (in Misioł 1999: 212).

Operation Vistula ended past failures and unpredictabilities in one fell swoop; this time, the instructions were very clear. The strategic plan of the operation dated 16 April 1947 ordered the evacuation of people from “all shades of Ukrainian nationality, including the Lemkos as well as mixed Polish-Ukrainian families.” In the territories where the UPA was still active, the “complete evacuation” of the population was envisioned, including “Polish civilians, irrespective of their profession, social standing, or party affiliation.”\(^\text{13}\) Between 28 April and 31 July 1947 over 140,000 inhabitants from the Rzeszów and Lublin provinces were expelled from their homes and deported to distant regions in west and northwest Poland. Despite of the fact that the preliminary plan demanded the “protection of the properties and the personal safety” of the deportees and even warned that the operation should involve the “resettlement and not the pacification” of people, punishment was an essential feature of the operation.\(^\text{14}\) Individuals suspected of collaboration with the UPA were singled out for beatings or murdered or sent to a concentration camp. Altogether, about 3,936 Ukrainians, including 823 women and children, were taken to the Jaworzno concentration camp (a wartime affiliate of the Auschwitz-Birkenau complex) where they became subjected to routine torture, typhus epidemics and extreme shortages of food and clothing (Snyder 2003: 200).

With the exception of a few locations where Ukrainians were able to stay as indispensable railway workers, through their connections with the administration, by registering as Roman Catholics, or by sheer “chance and coincidence”, to quote Babiński

\(^{12}\) The term “voluntary constraint” is used by the principle of the Kraków province in his letter to the Vice Minister of Public Administration Wł. Wolski, Kraków, 13 June 1946 (Misioł 1999: 212). See also the minutes of the conference organized by the political-educational department of the Kraków province from 7 May 1946 (Misioł 1999: 129-132).

\(^{13}\) Project outline of Special Operation “East” (Wschód)—later changed into Operation “Vistula” (Wista)—drafted by General Mossor and presented to the Polish politburo by Minister of Defense Żymierski and Minister of Public Security Radkiewicz on 16 April 1947 (Misioł 1993: 93).

Struggling for peace

(1997: 102), Operation Vistula practically ended centuries of Ukrainian and Lemko presence in the southeastern provinces of Poland. The immediate dispossession of the Ukrainian deportees, their deliberate dispersal over a large number of villages and towns in the “recovered territories”, the liquidation of the Greek Catholic church and the confiscation of church properties; the imposition of penalties for those leaving their designated villages or towns—all these were measures taken to prevent their return and encourage their assimilation in their new places of living (chapters 5 and 6). And so Operation Vistula marked the beginning of a new phase for Poland’s Ukrainians.

Brother’s keeper: the Party’s struggle against nationalism and discrimination

Notwithstanding the physical elimination of virtually all national minorities from Poland, the nationality problem continued to play a dominant part in Polish society and Party politics. “Currently, in terms of the size of the non-Polish population, the nationality problem in People’s Poland does not count for very much” writes Party ideologue Aleksander Sław (1958b: 29) in 1958. In fact, at the time of his writing, national minorities constituted no more than two percent—Ukrainians less then one percent—of the total population in Poland. Before the outbreak of World War II these figures had been significantly higher: 30 percent and 14 percent, respectively. “Yet the political weight of the nationality problem,” Sław (1958b: 29) continues, “cannot be measured against some numbers. The weight and its dimensions first of all lie hidden in the relationship and coexistence of the Polish community [...] with the minority populations.” Sław’s statement, besides being an expression of the social and political importance of the nationality problem during the 1950s, also points at the willingness of the communist leadership to critically reassess the relationship between Poles and non-Poles in Poland. This ambition was a response to two major developments: the liberalization of the political

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15 Babiński (1997: 102) estimates the number of Ukrainians that had been able to escape the expulsion and deportation policies to at most 50,000 persons out of a pre-deportation total of some 700,000.

16 Sław (1907-1971) served in the Polish People’s Army after World War II and was commander-in-chief of the paramilitary youth organization „Service to Poland” (Powszechna Organizacja „Służba Polsce”). He was a Party representative and secretary of the Commission of Nationality Affairs (Komisja KC PZPR do Spraw Narodowościowych) from 1957 to its abolishment in 1960. The fact that Sław was a Pole of Jewish descent may explain his politically engaged commitment to Poland’s minority issues (Mironowicz 2000 and Zięba, personal communication).

climate in Poland after Stalin’s death in 1953, and the revival of nationalist and antagonist sentiments in the larger Polish society. While the first gave an impulse to the progressive current within the Party bureaucracy, the second was increasingly considered an obstacle to economic and social progress.

The collective punishment of Poland’s Ukrainians left an inerasable blot on the Party’s reputation. And it gave rise to strong nationalist sentiments among Ukrainians, but also, and this especially, among Poles. Years of propaganda defending the cause of the country’s ‘National Unity’ had done its work; for most Poles the term “Ukrainian” became synonymous with “UPA bandit”, “fascist” and “Nazi-collaborator”. The strong nationalist and anti-Ukrainian undercurrent in Party propaganda aside, it is worth noting, as Zięba (1995b) does, that the postwar demographic upheaval helped contribute to a quick spreading of these stereotypes all over Poland, even to regions where before 1939 Ukrainians were unknown. The traumatized Polish “repatriates”, who left the Ukrainian Republic in ever growing numbers, brought along recollections of severe persecution and introduced their new surroundings to even more vigorous stereotypes, such as the Ukrainian “cutthroat” (rezun) and “barbarian” (dzicz). In addition, Poland’s residual Ukrainians, classified as “UPA bandits” and resettled to the ‘recovered territories’ during Operation Vistula, formed a constant reminder of the violent Polish-Ukrainian clashes. This provided the setting in which Party propagandists could conveniently manipulate the negative stereotypes that were already firmly rooted in Polish society (Zięba 1995b).

The changing attitude of the communist leadership regarding Poland’s national minorities was formalized in a resolution passed by the Presidium of the Council of Ministers in 1954. It reads “National groups in the Polish People’s Republic enjoy constitutionally guaranteed, equal rights in all public, political, economic, and cultural domains […] The existence of relics of bourgeois ideology in the consciousness of a significant part of the population, results in the situation where this basic constitutional principle is often being violated, where [national minorities] are subject to various forms of discrimination, where the Party and Government program is being perverted, and finally, where the factual situation of national minorities is not always in line with the constitutionally grounded legal status of the latter”.18 The document reveals the Party’s criticism of, and growing concern about, recurrent discrimination and violation of rights of minority group members. Letters of complaint about incidents of discrimination and even violence against minority group members—ranging from disrespectful treatment at work, the harassment of school children, to beatings and even ethnically motivated killings—reaching the Political Bureau in overwhelming quantities, added to the apprehensiveness of the central authorities (Mironowicz 2000: ch. 4).

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18 Quoted in Mironowicz (2000: ch. 3).
The nation-wide incidents of ethnically motivated discrimination raised the question why the Party had failed to instill the idea of “proletarian internationalism” in the society at large, despite years of unremitting propaganda. One major political mistake, argues Sław (1958b) in an essay in the Party organ “New Paths” (*Nowe Drogi*), has been the systematic negligence of the social, cultural and economic needs of the various minority populations. While on the one hand this negligence has contributed to a general skepticism among, and social isolation of minority group members, it has also contributed to the wide acceptance of a “false theory” which holds that the assimilation of Poland’s minorities is inevitable and necessary (1958b: 29). As a result, Sław argues, the Party has developed a blind spot for nationalist encumbrances in the society at large and among Party members: “Empty declarations and slogans, the absence of hard facts in our propaganda as well as the absence of proclamations of internationalism in the broadest sense, that is, of solidarity between nations and nation states, have failed to bring us [anything closer to] brotherly coexistence with our national minorities in a given village, in a given town, or at a given job location” (1958b: 29).

Sław’s call for a rightful treatment of all national minorities in Poland, for an adjustment of proclaimed ideals (Marxist-Leninist ideology) and real-existing problems (Marxist-Leninist practice), and for “ideological maturity” in all ranks of the Party bureaucracy, coincided with an unprecedented liberalization of Poland’s nationality policy. In this era of political liberalism (1954 to 1958) much was done to make up for the Party’s blind spot, or quoting Sław, for the fact that “we did not see or did not want to see” the few hundred thousand members of minority populations living in Poland (1958b: 29). In 1955, as a means to “eliminate the exploitation of one man by the other, and to guarantee freedom of cultural expression for each individual, in line with the dictate of peaceful coexistence between nations”, the Central Committee of the Communist Party summoned all Party and governmental institutions to take up a dialogue with and to engage in political work among Ukrainians, in order to increase Ukrainian participation in provincial administration, to regulate their economic support, to solve the problem concerning education in the Ukrainian language, and to stimulate the participation of Ukrainian youth in the communist Polish Youth Association. In 1956, after months of consultation with Party and government officials, the Ukrainian Socio-Cultural Society (UTSK—*Ukraińskie Towarzystwo Społeczno-Kulturalne*) was established and the editorial board of the Ukrainian weekly “Our Word” (*Nasze Słowo*) was formed (Mironowicz 2000: ch. 4).

A comprehensive political campaign to redress past wrongs and to regain the trust of the minorities was launched with the installation of a Commission of Nationality Affairs (*Komisja KC PZPR do Spraw Narodowościowych*) in January 1957. The staff of the Commission consisted of representatives of the KC PZPR, including Sław himself, of employees of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and of the leaders of the newly founded
Ukrainian, Byelorussian and Jewish socio-cultural societies (Mironowicz 2000: ch. 4). The Commission of Nationality Affairs became the chief fashioner of Poland’s nationality policy until its dissolution in March 1960. Under its guidance much was done to fight discrimination, to raise the quantity and quality of special education for minorities, to emphasize the patriotism of communists of non-Polish descent for a large Polish public by demonstrating their contribution to the defeat of fascism and the building of socialism, and to neutralize the two most persistent stereotypes in Polish society: all Jews are directors (dyrektorze) and all Ukrainians are UPA bandits (upowcy) (Mironowicz 2000: ch. 4). Party and non-Party organizations and institutions at all levels of society, including the Polish Press and Radio, were called to participate in meetings to reflect on issues of discrimination and intolerance and on ways to promote and popularize Poland’s non-Polish populations to the larger public. The following excerpt from a Central Committee letter directed to all Party cells and published in the popular press in April 1957 is illustrative of the atmosphere in those days:

[Party members] must fight for rigid observation of the principles of national equality guaranteed in the constitution of People’s Poland. The transgression of these principles through the direct or indirect limitation of legal privileges based on nationality, race, or religion is an act punishable by law. All national minorities have rights equal to those of any Polish citizen: the right to an education in the native language, to cultural organizations, to full respect for and cultivation of their cultural traditions. All citizens of the Polish People’s Republic have an equal right to work and hold any state, social or Party position in accordance with their professional and moral-political qualifications.¹⁹

In its new role as brothers’ keeper, the Party showed its allegiance to the ‘humanistic traditions’ of socialism. But it was not humanism alone that inspired the Party leadership to take up the fight against discrimination and inequality. Next to the social and cultural wellbeing of all of Poland’s citizens, the economic progress of the country as well as the Party’s reputation and moral legitimacy were at stake. This is made very explicit in one of first reports of the Commission of Nationality Affairs sent to the Political Bureau of the PZPR in 1957:

The persecution of citizens of non-Polish descent is inhumane and anti-socialist and brings about irretrievable losses to our country […] The discrimination of any social group causes laxity of public and social discipline. It has a demoralizing affect on its victims, and diminishes their human dignity. It paralyses the social and economic activity of the victims, and in the case of emigration, takes from the country thousands of skilled workers […] These facts unworthy of a civilized country reverberate loud echo’s in progressive and democratic circles abroad […] and

Struggling for peace

discredit Poland. The spreading wave of nationalism and chauvinism impedes our progress, weakens the Party, and hinders the building of socialism.\(^{20}\)

Not assimilation, but the incorporation and socialization of Poland’s minorities—these were the main objectives of the affirmative action policy adopted by the Party leadership. They had to be instrumental in resolving a number of issues with regard to Poland’s Ukrainians: their social isolation and economic backwardness, their distrust and apprehensiveness toward the Party and the state, and their strong appeal for a return to southeast Poland. The social and economic stagnation of the Ukrainians, the communists believed, next to being a debit entry on Poland’s social and economic account, triggered defensive nationalist responses from indigenous Ukrainians, lent support to the activities of Ukrainian émigré circles, and prompted a Ukrainian mass return to southeast Poland. These issues, as well as the articulation of a Lemko identity by a growing number of Ukrainians, were a thorn in the flesh of the communist leadership. Sław was very explicit in his criticism of the UTSK leadership; he held them responsible for being too susceptible to “external nationalist agitation” and for spoiling the Party’s goodwill. “Agitation for a return under the slogan of ‘preserving’ the Lemko culture is an insane platitude,” Sław (1958a: 61) argued. “Since each kind of nationalism is harmful for the working masses, so is this particular kind of nationalism, aiming at the postponement of the stabilization of the western territories and the prolongation of its transitional status, which in fact is detrimental to both our country, as well as to the economic and social interests of the Ukrainian population.”

That each minority group retained a number of schools, folklore groups, one native-language periodical, and one socio-cultural organization certainly helped strengthen the bond between Poland’s national minorities and the Party. But this, according to Laurie Koloski, was much less than they had hoped for (2004: 164). Sław, who confidently claimed that “hitherto distrustful” members of the minority groups “are beginning to look at our Party and at the government with new eyes—the idea of socialism has grown more familiar to them”, did not hide his irritation with the minorities’ growing political assertiveness (1958b: 34). The aim of the Party, Sław stressed in a Commission’s report, is not to satisfy the ambitions of the minorities’ leaders, but to eliminate discrimination and to create the conditions in which minority members feel free to express their social and cultural needs. This view is also expressed in another report from May 1958. “It is mandatory that the socio-cultural societies are aware of the reasons of their existence, in order to have them free themselves of nationalist perversions and accretions, and in order to have themselves pushed back on the road of defending the interests of the minorities.

\(^{20}\) Quoted in Mironowicz (2000: ch. 4).
before the Party and the government”.\textsuperscript{21} The Commission went on to state that the socio-cultural societies should keep far from meddling into political and economic affairs, and instead, should keep strictly to the task the Party had entrusted them with at the outset: the propagation of socialism and love for People’s Poland and the advancement of the level of civilization by means of socio-cultural work among their members (Mironowicz 2000: ch. 4).

In other words, what was tolerable and what not depended on the rationalizations of a Party leadership that was increasingly inclined to take political assertiveness for political disloyalty. “Though minorities actively participated in the newly created socio-cultural organizations and continued to present the authorities with concrete demands”, writes Koloski (2004: 164), “they could not, in the end, transcend official ambivalence, the lack of a coherent minority policy, or the steady increase of party/state control.” Being held in contempt by the Party leadership for displaying their distinctiveness and for making social and political claims, the minority organizations gradually alienated from their target groups and eventually evolved into political instruments for Party propaganda. What is more, since the furtherance of group interests was regarded with extreme suspicion, the socio-cultural work done by minority organizations increasingly involved activities for pure entertainment. From this deadlock, to paraphrase Koloski (2004: 183), there seemed no easy way out: whereas for Poland’s minorities “creating a separate folklore was only the beginning”, for the country’s communist officials “it was the outer limit”.

Following reorganization within the Party apparatus in March 1960, issues related to the nationality question were assigned to a newly formed “Nationality Commission” (\textit{Komisja Narodowościowa przy Wydziale Administracyjnym KC PZPR}) (Mironowicz 2000: ch. 5). In an effort to moderate the political concerns as well as the growing state expenditures, the new Party leadership devised a policy that facilitated the full assimilation of the national minorities into Polish society. This was done in two ways: by incorporating the minority organizations into the socialist market economy and by turning state tolerance towards national minorities from an active into a passive condition—that is, by refraining from interference. In the process, each minority organization was appointed a number of firms and branches of industry. Propagated as a necessary step to drag the non-Polish population into the production process, the central authorities hoped for the self-supporting capacity of the minority organizations in the long run. The experiment became a blatant failure, but it was nonetheless continued for several years (Mironowicz 2000: ch. 6).

Meanwhile, in the field of education a similar \textit{laissez-faire} policy was practiced. Arguing that the process of assimilation should “not be hastened”, but instead should take its “natural course”, the central authorities held back their support. As a result, the number of

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.
schools with a curriculum in the minorities’ vernacular dropped significantly during the 1960s (Mironowicz 2000: ch. 6).

By the 1970s the nationality question had been pushed back to the margins of political concern. In his speech delivered on 20 February 1976 General Secretary Edward Gierek referred to Poland as a one-nation state and spoke of the Party’s imperative to build a society based on a “moral political unity” (Mironowicz 2000: ch. 6). Obliging to the thesis of an ethnically homogeneous Poland, the central authorities considered the nationality question as of secondary importance in the process of building socialism. Minority organizations were tolerated as a necessary evil, because speeding up the process of assimilation, it was believed, would be detrimental to the integration of minority members. The central authorities nevertheless lent a helping hand to the assimilation process. For Poland’s Ukrainians, among others, this entailed the abolishment of Ukrainian education, the destruction of sites of Ukrainian national heritage, and the polonization of Ukrainian and Lemko geographical names in the southeastern provinces during the late 1970s (cf. Urbańczyk 1981; Mironowicz 2000). State propaganda against “Ukrainian nationalism” contributed to a revival of the stereotype of the “Ukrainian bandit” and to a defensive retreat of Poland’s Ukrainians into their own social confines (cf. Mokry 1981). During the late 1980s, with the communist regime in decline, a political polarization among Poland’s Ukrainians set in and ever since the political assertiveness of Poland’s Ukrainians has been on the increase (cf. chapter 6, Dziewierski et al. 1992; Mihalasky 2000; Nowak 2003).

Two sides, one coin: revisiting ethnic cleansing and affirmative action

Fifteen years after violent Polish-Ukrainian clashes in Volhynia and Galicia and eleven years after the ethnic cleansing of Ukrainians from Poland, a confident communist leadership committed itself to re-evaluate the much-troubled Polish-Ukrainian relationship. “The Ukrainian question in Poland,” Sław (1958a: 46) explains to his communist readership, “is a sensitive one, painful for both the substantial Ukrainian minority in Poland, as well as for a variety of Polish groups”. The Ukrainian minority, which had been violently pushed to the margins of Polish society during the 1940s, had become core focus of political attention of the communist leadership by the second half of the 1950s. Going beyond anti-discrimination policies, the central authorities took active affirmative measures to ensure equal opportunity for Poland’s Ukrainians and other minority group members in culture, education, employment and Party and state positions. While at first sight this might appear as inconsistent policymaking, on closer examination it is clear that it were the same incentives that gave rise to the subsequent, seemingly incompatible, state policies: appeals for a homogeneous and egalitarian society, political pressure from outside, and the wish for control by an authoritarian regime.
One important lesson John Skrentny (1996) draws from his study of affirmative action in the United States is that policy and lawmakers must maintain a moral legitimacy. “Within nations, shared understandings of morality and justice—a moral model—define the basic boundaries of policy and lawmaking”, writes Skrentny (1996: 236). “Anyone wishing to pursue a material interest lessens the risk of illegitimacy by acting within the boundaries of what is considered by the significant political players and audiences legitimate political action.” Conspicuous changes in Poland’s postwar ‘moral model’ produced two distinct and contradictory state policies: ethnic cleansing and affirmative action. Set in their times and contexts both policies remained within the boundaries of what was considered by the contemporary political players and audiences legitimate political action.

Even though the ethnic cleansing and affirmative action policies starkly contrasted in regard to their moral content, the political implications of the policies did in certain important respects overlap. Firstly, both policies had proven to be very instrumental in mitigating domestic political crises as well as in strengthening the moral legitimacy of a very vulnerable political regime. In the case of ethnic cleansing, legitimacy was sought from the majority population; in the case of affirmative action, legitimacy was sought from the minority populations. Secondly, both policies were part of a broader homogenizing project. In the first case this was to be achieved through the complete expulsion of minority populations; in the second case homogeneity was to be achieved through the minorities’ complete assimilation and integration. Last but not least, both policies gave preferential treatment to Poland’s minority populations, the first by way of repressive violence, the second by way of repressive tolerance.

That proclaimed practices of tolerance are “in many of its effective manifestations serving the cause of oppression” has been most convincingly argued by the sociologist Herbert Marcuse (1965: 81). In his essay Repressive Tolerance from 1965, Marcuse wrote about advanced democratic societies. While not all of his conclusions are compelling, some of his insights are highly relevant for the case of socialist totalitarian states (to which Marcuse himself has a tendency to turn a blind eye). “Tolerance is an end in itself only when it is truly universal, practiced by the rulers as well as by the ruled, by the lords as well as by the peasants, by the sheriffs as well as by their victims [sic]”, writes Marcuse (1965: 84-5). He further argues: “When tolerance mainly serves the protection and preservation of a repressive society, when it serves to neutralize opposition and to render men immune against other and better forms of life, then tolerance has been perverted” (Marcuse 1965: 111).

What Marcuse describes is a form of tolerance that is repressive, utilitarian and serving the political purposes of those in power. This is not unlike Buzalka’s (2007) concept of artificial tolerance. While Marcuse stresses the repressive aspect, Buzalka, writing about
post-communist Poland, emphasizes the artificial nature of elite-driven discourses on
tolerance that effectively serve “to reinforce the dominant worldview” (2007: 149).
According to Buzalka (2007: 149), current attempts to promote tolerance “from above”
perform particular functions in reinforcing power relations favorable to local religious and
secular elites.

Even when Polish socialist society was a proclaimed egalitarian society, without class
structure and with equal rights for everyone, tolerance in this country was undeniably not
an end in itself. Poland’s historical transition in 1944 from one social system to another
was not “sparked and driven by an effective movement ‘from below’” (Marcuse 1965:
108). While in fact staged by the Soviet liberator, the transition of Poland’s political
system from a capitalist ‘bourgeois’ into a socialist ‘egalitarian’ system turned Poland’s
communists into a major political force overnight (cf. Gross 1988). Both these
implications, the Soviet influence and the weak political power base of the new communist
regime, created the conditions in which military violence and destruction was deemed to
be required in the national interest.

Just as tolerance was not an aim in and of itself, the ethnic cleansing of Poland’s
Ukrainian minority, even though thoroughly uncompromising and excessively violent, was
not an aim in itself either, but a means to an end, at least in theory: to build a stable,
peaceful and ethnically homogeneous one-nation state in the socialist tradition of mutual
tolerance and solidarity among the working classes. It was not racial, religious or ethnic
hatred that fuelled the nationalist appeal for a homogeneous Poland. Moreover, the use of
violence was a means to regain the monopoly on violence and to enforce state control over
anti-communist Ukrainian and Polish armed forces; it was not aimed at achieving
homogeneity through genocide. Poland’s new communist leadership truly believed that the
expulsion of Poland’s national minorities was a cure-all for all sorts of problems (in
particular the problem of its moral illegitimacy) and that it was a necessary precondition
for progress in the country. A political momentum was created when the allied leaders
were more than willing to sanction such a, quoting Churchill, “clean sweep”. Enforced by
a powerless and inexperienced political leadership, Poland’s demographic engineering
project slowly gathered momentum and was finalized by means of trial-and-error.

For the same reason the affirmative action policies were hardly meant to meet the
requirements of Poland’s downtrodden Ukrainian minority. The enhancement of
participation of Ukrainians in Poland’s economic and social life gave a much-needed
impulse to the social and economic progress of the country as a whole. Ultimately, it
provided a means through which the Party leadership could gain the confidence and
support of the ‘outside’, non-Party world. It was to this ‘outside’ world—including
Poland’s minority populations, the Eastern Bloc countries, and the Diaspora communities
in the Western democracies—that the communist leadership directed its energetic attempts
to promote Poland as a country of comprehensive tolerance, free of racial hatred, nationalism and chauvinism. In this setting, the Party’s self-justification became a means to an end: to ease internal disquiet, to ward off criticism from the West, and to blend in the “brotherhood” of communist nations. Indeed, the signing of a declaration of friendship with the Soviet Republics, the German Democratic Republic, and Czechoslovakia in the late 1950s, committed Poland’s Party leadership to a respectful treatment of Poland’s Ukrainian, Byelorussian, German and Slovakian minorities.

“The nationality policy of the communists,” writes the historian Mironowicz in his conclusion, “was characterized by its blatant inconsistency. Internationalist rhetoric and slogans about the brotherhood of nations went hand in hand with efforts aiming at the assimilation of the non-Polish population and at the formation of an ethnically homogeneous Polish People’s Republic” (2000: ch. 7). While some Polish scholars have dismissed this inconsistency as communist hypocrisy and opportunism, it is also true that this inconsistency had been hotly debated by generations of contemporary Polish communists seeking to bridge the gap between Marxist-Leninist doctrine and practice. This is not unlike the efforts by US politicians to reconcile the inconsistencies of affirmative action policies that were introduced in the United States during the 1960s. The dilemma that continues to plague American society, according to Skrentny (1996: 240), is that “both racial inequality and exclusion and affirmative action are rejected for moral/cultural reasons, but many Americans came to believe that the former cannot be rectified without the latter.”

The dilemma that Poland’s communists faced is formulated succinctly by Koloski (2004: 183): “There was bound to be a deadlock between minority demands, which involved rethinking Polish statehood and society along multinational lines, and the immovability of the Polish authorities, for whom the integrity of Polish statehood relied in part on retaining its ‘mononational’ character.” In other words, liberties for Poland’s national minorities were controlled liberties and political demands were out of the question. Notwithstanding the sincere intentions of Poland’s communists, even the protagonists of a “socialism with a human face” had failed to reconcile the conflicting demands of the main ethics of communism—equality for all versus everyone is equal. The preceding and successive communist regimes were all trapped into a similar catch-22 situation: allowing liberties to minority groups endangered the quest for national homogeneity; constraints on the liberties of minority groups violated the code of equal rights for all.
Conclusions

Ethnic cleansing and affirmative action are two distinct political answers to a single political question: how can a state obtain control over and acquire legitimacy among its majority and minority populations? The answer to this question tells a great deal about the political intentions, mentalities, interests and constraints of those who rule the state. The adoption of both ethnic cleansing and affirmative action policies by the rulers of states within the former Soviet East Bloc was not uncommon. Martin (2001: 126) discusses a reverse case. In the 1920s the Soviet Union adopted “indigenization” (korenizatsiia) as a “prophylactic policy designed to defuse and prevent the development of nationalism” by simultaneously favoring the non-Russian minority populations and penalizing the Russian majority. In the course of the 1930s, however, affirmative action was abandoned and reversed, initially by means of a “Great Retreat”, later by a “Great Terror”, which pushed for Russian dominance and victimized the non-Russian populations that had been privileged earlier on. The seemingly contrary policies of ethnic cleansing and affirmative action, as enforced by the Soviet and Polish states, have shown their effectiveness in serving a single goal: the subjugation of minority and majority populations to repressive state control.

What happened to the Ukrainian minority in Poland, therefore, was not unique. Many political regimes in the former Soviet East Bloc shared an intrinsic ambivalent attitude with regard to their minority populations. But this ambivalence is not just reserved for rulers of socialist authoritarian states. Western democracies are dealing with similar political issues, just as they are encountering similar pressures and constraints. Skrentny (1996) and Marcuse (1965) make this explicit. Skrentny (1996: 239), unveiling the many ironies of affirmative action in the United States, among others concludes that inequality and poverty “are built into the equal opportunity society.” Marcuse (1965) charged western democracies for having introduced a perverted meaning of tolerance, but his charge could as well be extended to socialist authoritarian states. At the time of his writing, in 1965, tolerance in Poland was turned from practice to non-practice (laissez-faire) and administered to manipulated and indoctrinated individuals, who, quoting Marcuse (1965: 90), “parrot, as their own, the opinion of their masters, for whom heteronomy has become autonomy”. And this was just one way in which the principle of equality and tolerance was being violated, both in the east and in the west.

The question remains whether the policies toward Poland’s Ukrainian minority adopted by Poland’s communist leadership can be exposed as hypocrite. It is very likely that at various times the decisions made by Poland’s communist leadership had been motivated by political opportunism. But it was not opportunism alone that inspired Poland’s political leaders to move in certain political directions. One can only agree with Laurie Koloski’s conclusion that instead of “developing a coherent and comprehensive nationalities policy,
Poland’s postwar authorities substituted stop-gap measures and crisis management’ (2004: 182). At every step in the process of the building of a Polish socialist state, Poland’s communist leadership frantically searched for new ways in which desired ideals could be put into practice. Time and again efforts were made to find pragmatic solutions to urgent political problems. The scope of the solutions, however, was significantly narrowed down by domestic and international moral and political constraints. The most plausible argument, therefore, against the alleged political opportunism of Poland’s communist establishment is that the policies directed towards Poland’s minority populations were consistent with those directed towards the population at large—Poles too became subjected to a policy of homogenization, socialization, and assimilation from the moment the communists assumed power. And Poles too became the victims of the political conjunctures in the process of the building of a Polish socialist utopia.