

## CHAPTER 8

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# Linguistic Acculturations and Reconstructions in the ULB Group (Ukraine, Lithuania, and Belarus)

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Presenting the linguistic problems of the ULB region in only a few pages is all the more difficult because it brings into play not only the native languages (if this term even has a meaning) but also—in particular if one wants to treat these problems in the only manner that will shed light on them, that of the long-term perspective—the languages of the two principal neighbors (Polish and Russian) as well as languages such as Yiddish, dead languages used in the religions of these peoples (Slavonic, Latin, Hebrew), not to mention frequent interferences from German, French, some Scandinavian languages, and Romanian. From this multiplicity flows another complexity that also relates to a more general problem: are the politics or policies of the language the factor that ultimately determines whether or not this language predominates?

The significance of a language is defined and established as a function of very diverse cultural pressures, in which the voluntary portion that is associated with politics is certainly important, but perhaps not always decisive. There is doubtless an urge to rationalize. It would be very satisfying for the human mind—especially for the French mind—to say that it would be better to dismiss the problem at once in favor of a universalist solution, moving away from the irrational ethnopsychological contingencies, but the example of the nations of Central–Eastern Europe, considered in a time like the present, denies the possibility of

this interpretation, which throws into doubt the very validity of the politics of a language as it stands, given that instability, precariousness, and manipulation seem to be constants in this domain.

Each of the countries considered here is a fragment of the Russian-Soviet Empire, which collapsed 14 years ago and which had succeeded in imposing its own lingua franca, Russian. The outside world, and especially the European Union, is still often satisfied with communicating in this basic Russian with the “gray zone,” which still has hardly been truly taken into account, since renouncing a single language is as difficult as abandoning *la pensée unique*, guaranteed by imperialism and proof of the simplicity of relations. The linguistic politics of Radio France International excellently illustrate the scorn held in the West toward the newly independent states. Russia was declared, beginning on February 7, 1992, in a treaty of friendship with France, “inheritor of the Soviet Union,” thus remaining—uniquely so, in accordance with the right of the biggest and the strongest—the pivot of international communication. Some years later the countries of their region—or at least their elites—adopted English like everyone else. But however strong the fascination with the new American ‘big brother’, the bond to local linguistic roots remains fundamental—and stronger, at least for the present, than the siren-calls of American globalization.

Can the states of this region, on the other hand, which have only known very brief periods of sovereignty in contemporary times—20 years for Lithuania between the two wars, a few months for Ukraine between 1918 and 1920, even fewer for Belarus in 1918—avoid perpetuating a situation that, in their own country, is so clearly a colonial legacy? This is a problem that only otherwise exists in Africa. It is complicated here, however, by a much more acute historical awareness, which takes us back several centuries before our own and makes clear, after a brief assessment of the current problem, all the linguistic strata that have been superimposed over time.

The example of the Ukrainian language, by far the most widely spoken of the three, demonstrates the difficulty faced by the decision makers in these countries. According to a survey performed by the Mohyla Academy in Kyïv (Kiev) in 1994, while 95 percent of the Ukrainian population is divided between two groups, the Ukrainians (73 percent) and the Russians (22 percent), the languages are far from following this distribution. In the group that identifies itself as Ukrainian, 38 percent speak Russian, leaving the percentage of those speaking Ukrainian at 40 percent and thus a minority in their own

country.<sup>1</sup> Only Galicia, the western part of Ukraine annexed by Stalin in 1944–1945, for reasons that we will return to later, speaks Ukrainian, in a proportion of between 78 and 91 percent depending on districts. To the east of the Dniepr and south to the Black Sea, only 11–15 percent of the population speaks Ukrainian. In the capital of the country, 72.4 percent of the 4 million inhabitants identify themselves as Ukrainian, 64 percent say that Ukrainian should be their language, but only 23.6 percent can speak it fluently. The new education policy is improving the situation, but the process will take time.

Such is the result of a long tsarist policy of prohibition and of a Soviet policy of draconian limitations on language. Only 14 years ago, it was impossible to find a Ukrainian preschool in Kyïv, and the rare primary schools there condemned the students never to achieve high social rank. The Ukrainian language, reduced to the status of a “little Russian” dialect, spoken only in certain families, particularly in rural areas, was promoted, with independence in 1991, to the rank of official language. More than one generation will doubtless be necessary for a majority of the population to speak Ukrainian and to erase the sense of inferiority of those who had continued to speak it in spite of the circumstances.

Andrew Wilson, one of the best English experts in this area, suggests<sup>2</sup> that the colonial legacy is still too resonant to be eliminated gradually, and that to interfere with the foundation of the *pax sovietica* could result in a return of the famous Ukrainian “nationalism,” amplified and demonized for decades by Kremlinologists who are as ignorant as they are fascinated by the Great Russia. In contrast, the problem faced by local decision makers has its source above all in the approach to thinking about two contradictory requirements: that of a relative “linguistic peace” and that of remedying an ancestral prejudice that is ill recognized by the outside world, but which is fundamental for the native languages.

The next few years will show whether such a policy of balance can emerge, as Nicolas Riabčuk suggests in a remarkable article<sup>3</sup>, in a civic society where humanist values will prevail over linguistic-cultural ones; but the possibility of a more practical bilingualism—in which each citizen has the right to address the government in a given language and receive an oral or written response in that language—is still distant. According to former Polish ambassador Jerzy Kozakiewicz, who lived in Kyïv from 1991 to 1996, the result of the serious postcolonial problems posed by the coexistence of Russian and Ukrainian is separatism.<sup>4</sup> The international community, particularly the EU, has an interest in and the influence to ensure that the reestablishment of linguistic justice is

gradually introduced, perhaps by means of regional methods, but it is important that the broader ignorance that continues to deprive the languages and cultures of the ULB of the right of existence be dispelled without delay.

It is at this point that a review of history is essential. The dignity of the nations of this supposed gray zone is, in large part, a result of the tenaciousness of their linguistic resistance. Since the studies of Hroch, Gellner, and Hobsbawm, it has become commonplace to include a linguistic factor among the three or four axes around which all nationalisms are articulated, all construction of nationalities or of patriotisms throughout the nineteenth century, along with historic, ethnographic, and anthropologic factors. As for numerous other peoples, the preservation of the languages of the ULB, and then the exaltation of this preservation, were and remain among their main legitimating arguments. Granted, along with preservation comes a threat, and it thus implies one or more struggles. These languages, were on several occasions forced to disappear and always, under almost miraculous conditions, regained vigor. The hegemonic powers in the region sought to overwhelm these languages but they endured in a few isolated individuals, or in weak associations, and survived, indeed rebuilt themselves from the fragments.

As Alain Dieckhoff has already undertaken the analysis of the return of Hebrew to the vehicular languages, we will not dwell on the maturation of the Jewish nation during the five centuries of its presence in Central–Eastern Europe. It is, however, indispensable to mention that it was around Yiddish that the Jews forged their identity in this region, which Catherine II transformed into a forced “area of residence.” They built up this identity and resisted all attempts and temptations to assimilate with first the Polish sphere of influence, and then the Russian. The Yiddish–Polish bilingualism of the eighteenth century, did not have the opportunity to become a Polish acculturation, in spite of the efforts to make it so in 1789, concomitant with French efforts, due to the partitions of Poland. The Yiddish–Russian bilingualism, or better yet the Yiddish–Austrian, had a slightly more assimilating effect toward the end of the nineteenth century, when the rise of anti-Semitism at times made the Jewish world and its language feel like foreign entities. Nevertheless, the Jewish-centric areas affirmed, in spite of expectations, their greatest vitality at the end of the nineteenth and in the twentieth century. For a long time, the popular view of Hassidism associated it with Yiddish in all the *shtetls* of the ULB and of ex-Poland. Both Bund and American emigration contributed to the reinforcement of the identity-building

character of this language, with which Hebrew, principally spoken originally in talmudic schools could not compete until the slow emergence of Zionism in the twentieth century.

Leaving this important question to the specialists,<sup>5</sup> we return to the other national identities of the ULB to ask first why the one that seemed to be furthest on the course toward formation, Belarusian, seems today to be the weakest and most threatened; second, why Ukrainian has taken so long to differentiate itself, and third, how Lithuanian appears to have made its way underground from the thirteenth to the nineteenth century.

If one accepts the existence of a very hypothetical Slavic language common to all the principalities or proto-national bodies that formed the immense Rus of the eighth to the thirteenth century, it must be noted that from the outset—that is, in the period when our imprecise knowledge begins—the linguistic factor was far from a politically unifying force, since, beyond the stability of the principality of Kiev, from the tenth to the twelfth century all the princes were battling one another. What the historiography calls the “Kievan Rus” (while the word *Russia*, *Rossija*, was used for the first time only in 1485 to designate the incipient Moscovia) in fact refers above all to the area that we are addressing here and that Latin sources, seeking to translate Rus, call Ruthenia. The only common trait of these territories—was less the language than the orthodox religion, introduced from Byzantium. Moreover, since that time the texts attest to the linguistic regionalisms that foreshadowed future differentiations.

The first known chronicles, which bring together the scraps of history of these regions, were used by Russian historiography in the quest for legitimization of precursors to the Muscovite state, but their language, apart from the few local variants that foreshadowed the future popular differentiations, remains substantially linked to the church Slavonic that came from the South with the Bulgarian or Macedonian evangelists. They begin with the famous *Chronicle of Ancient Times* that describes, in 1113, the principal facts of the dynasty of the Kyïv princes. The chronicles of Volhynia and of Halytch are also very close to Slavonic, although one can already discern some Ukrainian features. But the sacred and cultural language did not serve as a national cement before a written language appeared.

The first great manifestation of the political role of an eastern Slavic language is the adoption of Ruthenian, or more precisely its northern variation, old Belarusian, by the grand dukes of Lithuania beginning at

the dawn of the thirteenth century. The tiny dukedom, which spoke a completely distinct language belonging to the Baltic family, deliberately adapted to the culture of the immense Slavic territories between the Baltic and the Black Seas in order to dominate them politically and to become one of the largest states of Europe, a barrier that the Tatars never succeeded in breaching even as they made vassal states of the eastern fringes of the Slavic territory. This is a peculiar case—which would not be the last, as will be seen—of a sort of renunciation by the elites in power of their own linguistic culture in order to vastly increase the extent of their authority. The grand ducal chancellery of Vilna (Vilnius) from this point on spoke only Ruthenian (*jazyk ruski*, language of Rus, not of Russia, which did not yet exist) and partially adopted the orthodox religion (many princes remained pagans), while only the lower classes from the small, primitive territory of Lithuania, on the Baltic coast, in Samogitia, in the vicinity of Kovno (Kaunas), continued, more and more marginally, to speak Lithuanian.

The language of White Ruthenia thus had the opportunity to endure as an expression of a proto-national formation that was, regardless, a powerful body. Outside of the official acts of the chancellery, however, it did not leave a single notable literary work. From the end of the fourteenth century, the Grand Duke was exposed to the slow emergence of Moscovia, which forced him, following in the path of his ancestors, to turn to another culture, also considered to be superior: this time, the Polish. In 1386 he married the young Jadwiga of Poland, thus concluding a Lithuanian–Polish union that was accompanied by his conversion to Catholicism. The language of the immense grand duchy was then gradually dominated by Polish. The three successive versions of the *Lithuanian Code*, a compendium of the laws of the grand duchy compiled in the sixteenth century, remained in Ruthenian and were as applicable in Lithuania *sensu stricto* and in White Ruthenia as in what is today Ukraine, but they were all written in Latin and Polish as well. In 1596 (after the unification of the Polish and Lithuanian nobilities in 1569 in Lublin, which took the single title of “nobiliary nation”), the Poles thought that acculturation was extensive enough to abolish the orthodox church and reattach it to Rome (Union of Brest, 1596). In 1632, they recognized that such a radical measure would enflame the Ruthenian patriotism of the peasants, exacerbated by the cruelty of serfdom, and thus they reauthorized orthodoxy (alongside the Uniate Church that was nevertheless maintained), but their blindness before the linguistic realities worsened and multilingualism, still the rule in the sixteenth century, gave way all the more easily to the hegemony of Polish

as the Ruthenian elites themselves renounced their roots and adopted Polish culture.<sup>6</sup> As happened before with Lithuanian, Ruthenian (White-Ruthenian or Ukrainian, which were growing increasingly differentiated) was culturally marginalized and became the language only of peasants or Cossacks, groups of peasant origin, who were the only ones concerned with preserving their linguistic–religious identity. The Polish diet finished the process in 1696 by prohibiting the use of Ruthenian in official business throughout the Republic. The politics of developing the Uniate Church to the detriment of orthodoxy resumed with new intensity in the first half of the eighteenth century. Ten years earlier, in 1686, in signing the peace accord that fixed its border with the Polesh Lithuanion Republic at the Dniepr, Russia was recognized as guardian of all the orthodox religions in existence to the West of this river. Thus on the one hand Russia annexed the eastern part of Ukraine, and on the other hand it gave itself, within the Republic, a right that, between 1772 and 1795, would be the Trojan horse of the “defense” of orthodoxy and the supposed “return” of the Lithuanian-Russian territories. Even if religious factors were much more decisive than linguistic factors in this third cultural transfer, there is no doubt that the latter played a major role. Just as the Poles always pretended to consider the Ruthenian languages as variant dialects of Polish, the Russians began treating these languages as variants of Russian to be erased as quickly as possible.

Bela Rus rapidly accepted conversion to this new culture. Since the end of the seventeenth century, its rare religious elites, such as Simeon of Polotsk, made their careers in Moscow if they were not secular and had not adopted Polish culture, while the Ruthenian elites of the South, more Westernized through Polish influence, obstinately affirmed the continuance of their identity, which they henceforth called Ukrainian. Mazepa, who promoted this identity as unsuccessfully in 1709 as Hmielnitsky had in 1648, expressed through his linguistic culture an intellectual richness that was still too exceptional for implementation: his dream of reuniting the Ukraine of the Russians and that of the Poles under a unique Hetmanate was expressed in Latin.

In the nineteenth century, the Ukrainian, Belarusian, and Lithuanian languages, caught as they were between the declining hegemony of the Poles and the increasing hegemony of the Russians, could no longer count on the actions of individuals and from that point on were fully exposed to a policy of active assimilation. The only Ruthenian enclave that escaped from this linguistic phagocytosis was the portion of the Republic that became part of Austria, Galicia, where 20 percent of

Ukrainians lived. Since 1772 (the first Partition), Vienna conducted an astonishing policy that encouraged the separate training of the Uniate priests in this region, which, by nurturing Ukrainian Slavonic, little by little became the very loyalist and conservative setting for the only authorized Ruthenian group to develop in Europe, becoming visible for the first time in the political movements of 1848.

The Russians reacted in exactly the opposite manner. They replaced the Hetmanate and the last traces of Ruthenian autonomy in 1783. From 1803 to 1832, they paradoxically allowed the Poles, in their own language, to rebuild the system of lower and higher education over all the immense Lithuanian–Ruthenian territory, which for a long time delayed Russian linguistic penetration in these regions but allowed no place for the local languages. Outside of this, however, the russification of “the western provinces,” as they were called so as not to evoke their identity, did not cease until 1905. In 1839, more than 2 million Uniates were officially reunited with orthodoxy and thus cut off from the West. In 1840, the old *Lithuanian Statute*, still in effect, was replaced by Russian law, which became binding in all administration and religion. Throughout this period, the “awakeners” (as were found in all the Central and Eastern nations of Europe) were largely absent due to the overwhelming illiteracy of the peasants, the only speakers of local languages. The philosopher Skovoroda, or the poet Kotliarevski remained marginalized for the Ukrainians of the Russian Empire at the end of the eighteenth century. As for the Belarusians, they were reduced to leaving their culture and their language in the hands of amateurs who were often enlightened and passionate, but who did not belong to their own ranks. According to whether they were Polish or Russian, the latter wrote legends or songs that they collected in the countryside in the 1840s, sometimes using the Latin alphabet, sometimes the Cyrillic. The former (Barszczewski, Danilowicz, Lelewel) highlighted the chronicles of Lithuanian Rus, while the latter (Roumiantsev, Lobjko, Grigorovitch) looked to them for proof of ‘Russian-ness’. The manipulation of the linguistic analogies had only just begun. In his quest for legitimization through a foundation in antiquity, the Pole Czeczot claimed that the White-Russian language was that of the Krivitches, a proto-Slavic tribe from the sixth century.

Toward the middle of the nineteenth century, language was consciously made part of nationalistic struggles, and, in the years preceding the abolition of serfdom in the Russian Empire, it began to be incorporated into the Polish–Russian fight for native loyalties. Thus, during the insurrection



of 1863–1864, Poles published the newspaper *Muzycka Pravda* (the Moujik truth) in Belarusian and in the Latin alphabet in a vain attempt to bring the peasants over to their cause. From 1865 to 1905, the Belarusian language was prohibited by the Russians, which explains—in the absence of an intelligentsia and active emigrant groups—the very weak national consciousness of the population, whose first publications, around the year 1905, still alternated between the Latin alphabet and the Cyrillic. The German occupiers, skillfully inspired by Falkenheim between 1917 and 1919, concentrated on cultivating this identity and on creating a system of education in the national language, but the independence declared in March 1918 only lasted a few months and the takeover by the Bolsheviks, although followed temporarily by a few fertile years of White-Ruthenization, retreated into traditional Russification after the 1930s. The consequences of this became clear after the second “independence” in 1991.

The Ruthenian–Ukrainian language, spoken by a nationality four or five times as numerous as its Belarussian neighbors, did not allow itself to be so easily absorbed. It also benefited from external aid that the White-Ruthenians never had. If the tsars, like the Third French Republic, had understood the unifying power of education and had not feared the social promotion of the peasants before and after the abolition of serfdom as much as they did, it is likely that the acculturation of the Ukrainians would have occurred more or less as that of the Occitans or the Bretons; but, since the middle of the nineteenth century, the mechanisms of a linguistic renaissance, constantly stimulated by adversity, favored the unification of the Ukrainian nation.

We have seen that the Ukrainian language, maintained by the Uniate clerics in Galicia, continued to resemble Slavonic. The 43 books published between 1837 and 1850 in Lviv (Lwów, Lemberg) were written by 40 Uniate priests. These same priests, in 1848, supported the early attempts at an autonomous national body, the Supreme Ruthenian Council, as well as the first Ukrainian newspaper. Their archaic language and their social conservatism put them in opposition to the lay editors of a magazine, the *Dniestr Rusalka*, who preferred the language spoken by the peasants. The disagreement could have continued much longer had it not been for the important example of both the popular and harmonious language of the poetry and texts of Taras Shevchenko, an emancipated serf who miraculously had access to European culture in Russia, whose condemnation by St. Petersburg in 1847 soon brought to him the rank of national poet.

The notion of a national poet, little understood in the West but very common for these populations who had a late and difficult cultural awakening, plays a fundamental role in the stabilization and exaltation of their languages. It sanctions access, especially in the eyes of those involved, to the international concert of “great” literature and acted, as it were, as a substantial counterweight to those who believed, not without reason, that the work of Nicolas Gogol anchored Ukrainian culture in the Russian language, or that the works of the poets Goszczynski, Malczewski, and Zaleski anchored it at the same time in the Polish language.

Another important work, published in 1846 in St. Petersburg, gave to the few Ukrainian intellectuals of the Russian Empire knowledge of the historic continuity of their nation and undermined the legitimizing constructions of Great Russian historians, Karamzine and Pogodine. It was called the *Istoria Rusov* (the History of the Ruthenians), an apocryphal work dating likely from the beginning of the nineteenth century that put forth the first project of legitimization, which would be built upon by V. Antonovytsch, father of the historiography of the country, in Ukrainian in the 1860s. Antonovytsch, a Polish landowner from Ukraine, was one of a group of populist nobles who set out to make good the ‘harm’ that Polish acculturation had caused their ancestors three centuries before, and who decided to speak only the language of the peasants in order to regain their Ruthenian roots. Ironically treated as “chlopomanes” (peasant fanatics) by the tsarist authorities, these cultural and linguistic renegades were considered by the Minister of the Interior, Valuev, to be dangerous enough—while Chevtchenko, returned from exile, and a few others had started the Ukrainian newspaper *Osnova* in St. Petersburg—to provoke a *ukase*, as happened for Belarusian, completely prohibiting the Ukrainian language.

Once again, the most active source of Ukrainian linguistic development was concentrated in Austrian Galicia, while the Russians accused Vienna of manipulating “Ukrainism” against them. A large emigration to the United States and Canada, newspapers in Geneva (edited by Dragomanov), and activists in France (Podolinski) gave greater and greater support to the language. Meanwhile, in the Russian Empire, an intelligentsia grown out of the liberated serf community clandestinely maintained the language, in secret contact with the numerous cultural cells of the *Prosvita* society officially encouraged in Galicia through its lecture halls, its small libraries, its newspapers, and the chair of Ukrainian history at the University of Lviv that, beginning in 1894, was given to Professor Hruchevsky.

This explains the dichotomy between the two Ukrainian Republics that existed in the former Russian and Austrian territories in 1919. The common language only served to unite them briefly, the lack of understanding and Western pressure divided them again until 1944, when Stalin (after the failure of his first attempt of 1939–1941) created the Greater Ukraine just as the nationalists at the beginning of the century, such as Mihnovsky, had imagined it. In the intervening years the relatively free use of the Ukrainian language in Polish Galicia from 1923 to 1939 permitted, in spite of political pressures, an even greater enrichment of Ukrainian identity than that in the vast Soviet region bled dry by the famine instigated in 1933. Between 1945 and 1991, however, the Russian language became that of “Soviet citizenship” everywhere. The newly independent Ukrainian nation thus had to look again for linguistic reference points.

To come full circle and show how much the vitality of language is essential to the survival of nations, the renaissance/reconstruction of the Lithuanian language is the crowning example. We recall how the Grand Lithuanian Dukes and the elite of this small people, geographically limited to a small corner of the Baltic coast, had, beginning in the 13th century, created an immense state encompassing all the Ruthenians almost to the Black Sea, at the price of two successive renouncements of their language: first they were made Ruthenian, then they adopted Polish, as did the Ruthenian elites. Meanwhile, just as the Ruthenian orthodox peasants could continue to maintain an idea of their original identity thanks to their priests, so Lithuanian peasants preserved their language thanks to their clergy.

In the sixteenth century, at a time when the elites were adopting Polish culture, this clergy was often won over by the Reformation. The Calvinists were the first to translate the Gospel into Lithuanian, at a time when, to the neighboring areas, Lithuanian meant little more than the vast expanse of the grand duchy. The Polish toponymy has kept alive the memory of this territorial expansion until today. One says in Polish *Minsk Litewski* (Minsk-in-Lithuania), as one says in Russian *Brest-Litovsk* (Brest-in-Lithuania). But, if only for reasons of management of the rural domains, a vague contact was required with the small population that remained pagan until the fourteenth century, in some cases until the fifteenth century. It is revealing that the oldest texts known in Lithuanian are brief tenant farming contracts.

The Counter-Reformation continued what the Reformation had begun. Jesuits and Dominicans thus published, in turn, the Gospels,

books of devotion, even a dictionary, and preached in Lithuanian. This preservation of a “peasant” language was doubtless not just **proforma** since, in 1775, K. Donelaitis used it to write what is considered to be the first masterpiece of Lithuanian culture, an extensive idyll in the style of Delille entitled *Metai* (the Seasons), which was only uncovered and published in the nineteenth century by the Germans.

Absorbed, like the Ruthenians, into the Russian Empire at the time of the partitions of the Polish–Lithuanian Republic, the peasants continued to speak their particular language. Meanwhile, Karamzine spoke of a Lithuania that would be “Russian for all eternity,” and the Poles of the University of Vilna abandoned the project, barely envisioned, of a Lithuanian chair and filled the country with Polish schools.

In Samogitia, the heart of Lithuania, the successive bishops—Giedroyc, Valanciaus, and Baranauskas—encouraged a series of local scholars throughout the nineteenth century, notably D. Poška and A. Straždas, who cultivated the popular traditions and language before 1830, but, here as with the Ukrainians, a linguistic resurrection was not possible without the help of foreign scholars: Russians, Poles, and, in this case in particular, Germans at the University of Königsberg. The disputes between local nonexperts who spoke all the regional variants of the language, which for years had not been codified, only subsided at the end of the century by merging, and not without much borrowing and multiple neologisms. Dictionaries, grammar books, and manuals then flowed from the plumes of the scholars of Königsberg. The adoption of an alphabet inspired by the Czech also showed the fruitful contacts between nationalities in search of recognition and the pooling of European linguistic study. As in Ukraine and Poland, the Russian linguistic persecutions had the reverse effect of what was intended. When, in 1865, the same minister Valuev thought it possible to prohibit the printing of Lithuanian publications and books in “Latin-Polish” characters and imposed the Cyrillic alphabet by referring to cases in which certain Lithuanian princes from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries imposed orthodoxy, he provoked a resistance movement that lasted until the measure was lifted in 1905. One Bishop Valancius organized an extensive clandestine market for Catholic religious books beginning in Eastern Prussia, most notably in Tilsitt, while Lithuanian emigrants to the United States also offered aid. From Riga, Posen (Poznan), and Warsaw, groups of promoters energized this culture, which had emerged from the depths of the ages, and, like elsewhere, the intelligentsia that had grown out of the peasant class became emboldened after the abolition of serfdom thanks to newspapers and a remarkable artistic life.

In the end, the tenacity of the smallest of the peoples of the ULB, whose language had been the longest eclipsed, owes the fact that it was the only one recognized at the 1919 Peace Conference to its underground survival, which gave it the most durable independence of the three that made up the former grand duchy. Perhaps this greater resistance to assimilation is the result of the radically irreducible character of its uniquely Baltic substratum in the Slavic environment.

Such a brief survey of very complex problems requires too many simplifications, but certain elementary truths emerge. Language, a fundamental element of the definition of cultures, has been, here as elsewhere, and remains the principal indicator of national homogeneity. The homogeneity of states is another matter. The exceptional accumulation of linguistic strata in this region during the past seven or eight centuries, the successive absorptions and rejections, the particularly shocking use of force and manipulation, and the realization of the sometimes decisive role of external interventions makes us understand the ULB as a fragile region that merits closer attention than it usually gets.

### Notes

1. V. Xmelko, 1994, "Problemy zberežennja suverennoji, deržavnosti Ukrajinu: Demokratyčny Vybir" (The Problems of the Preservation of Ukrainian Sovereignty: The Democratic Choice), *Informacyjny bjuleten PDVU*, Kyiv 27.
2. A. Wilson, *Ukrainian Nationalism of the 1990s*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
3. N. Riabčuk, "(De) mifologizacija nacionalizma" (The (de)Mythologization of Nationalism), *Den*, Kiev, September 18, 1997, p. 4.
4. J. Kozakiewicz, "Ukrainski regionalizm i separatyzm, Z problematyki ustroju terytorialnego Ukrainy," *Obóz* 33, Warszawa (Warsaw), 1998, pp. 47–68.
5. For a general overview, cf. D. Tollet, *Histoire des Juifs de Pologne, du XVIe siècle à nos jours* (History of the Jews of Poland, from the 16th Century to Today), PUF, Paris, 1992, which widely covers the Jews of the eastern areas from the former Polish–Lithuanian Republic.
6. T. Chynczewska-Hennel, *Świadomość narodowa szlachty ukraińskiej od schyłku XVI do połowy XVIIw* (The National Consciousness of the Ukrainian Nobility from the End of the 16th to the Middle of the 17th Century), Warszawa: PWN, 1985; A. Martel, *La langue polonaise dans les pays ruthènes 1569–1667* (The Polish Language in the Ruthenian Countries, 1569–1667) Lille, University Press 1938.