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The “Strategic Partnership” between Poland and Ukraine

Poland’s Attitude towards Independent Ukraine and the Beginning of Cooperation between Poland and Ukraine

Ukraine declared itself a sovereign state on July 16, 1990. It was the first step towards its way to independence. Poland warmly welcomed this fact by relevant resolutions passed by both chambers of the Polish Parliament—by the Senate (the upper chamber) on July 27, 1990 and by the Sejm (the lower chamber) on July 28, 1990—and immediately engaged in intensive political contacts with Kiev. Poland, which after 1989 had embarked on an independent foreign policy and was itself interested in the demise of the Soviet “internal” and “external” empire, supported the disintegration of the USSR. Its eastern policy, however, was cautious, which was expressed in the “two-track” concept, implemented since autumn 1990 towards Moscow, as the “center”, and the republics heading towards independence.¹ During the visit of Krzysztof Skubiszewski, the chief of Polish diplomacy, in Kiev on October 13, 1990, a bilateral declaration was signed on the rules and fundamental development directions for the relations between Poland and Ukraine. In the document both parties stated that they held no territorial claims towards each other and would not stake any such claims in the future, and that their present borders were inviolable (Art. 3).²

¹ K. Skubiszewski, „Polska polityka zagraniczna”, in: *Rocznik Polskiej Polityki Zagranicznej* 1991, p. 21-22.

² This document, similarly to most other documents quoted in this paper is in the Author’s possession.

Ukraine assumed a particular role in the concept of Polish policy towards the East. There was high level of awareness in Poland that the emergence and survival of the independent Ukrainian state will be of key importance to the final disintegration of the Soviet Union and weakening Russia's attempts to take over USSR's imperial position. It was feared that the breakdown of the independent Ukrainian state could lead to the re-establishment of the imperial structures over the former USSR territory, which also today is thought of as a fact that could seriously threaten Poland's vital national interests. It has been suggested that there's a close correlation between the independence of Ukraine and Poland's national security. This is the main reason why Warsaw has decided to build a close partnership with Kiev and take steps to support the consolidation of the independent Ukrainian statehood. For obvious reasons Poland anxiously reacts to the statements made from time to time by Russian politicians, quoting Russia's "special interests" or its "specific role" in Ukraine. Polish leaders do not accept such statements and they are convinced that Ukraine's independence contributes towards strengthening the stability in the post-cold-war Europe, and at the same time—in a long term perspective—towards strengthening the democracy in Russia itself. This view was strongly supported by, and perhaps still represents a copy of, the American political strategy towards Kiev as advocated by Zbigniew Brzezinski.³ Generally speaking, however, Poland perceives the need to proceed cautiously in shaping their relations with Ukraine, in order not to jeopardize the relations between Poland and Russia.⁴

The announcement on August 24, 1991 by the Supreme Council of Ukraine's Declaration of Independence meant the beginning of the decisive stage of the implementation by the political elite in Kiev of their strategy to leave the Soviet Union. The chances to do so have greatly increased because, after the unsuccessful coup in Moscow (the so called "Yanaiiev's putsch" on August 19–21, 1991), the fate of the USSR had already been sealed, and independence was being proclaimed by successive Soviet republics. The

³ See: Z. Brzezinski, „Premature of Partnership”, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 73 (March–April 1994), No.2, p.80.

⁴ See: B. Surmacz, „Stan i perspektywy rozwoju stosunków polsko-ukraińskich”, in: B. Łomiński, M. Stolarczyk (eds.) *Polska i jej siedzi w latach dziewięćdziesiątych. Polityczne i ekonomiczne aspekty współpracy i integracji*, Katowice 1998, p. 200.

Declaration of Independence was to be confirmed by a national referendum.

Poland also expressed its satisfaction with Ukraine's Declaration of Independence. This time again a resolution in support of the fact was first passed through the Senate (August 30, 1991) and then through the Sejm (August 31, 1991). The Sejm called upon Ukraine to "proceed along the way of democratic changes, which represent a precondition to good neighbor relations and extensive cooperation between Poland and Ukraine".⁵ In a move towards strengthening the cooperation, a Polish-Ukrainian consular convention was signed on September 8, which provided, for example, for establishing a consular agency in Lviv. The beginning of cooperation at a consular level carried a lot of weight, because it attested to the goodwill of both states with regard to the issues of ethnic minorities, which couldn't be done under previous Soviet rule. On October 4-5, 1995, a working visit to Poland was paid by Ukraine's Prime Minister Vitold Fokin; in the course of the visit a number of agreements on economic cooperation was signed as well as a protocol, important for political cooperation, on the consultations between foreign ministries of both countries. Several days later (October 7-8) Warsaw was visited by a delegation of the Ukrainian government headed by the foreign affairs minister, Anatoli Zlenko. Poland immediately declared that it recognized Ukraine's independence. The declaration on the rules and fundamental development directions for the relations between Poland and Ukraine, signed a year ago, was announced in Kiev on October 13, 1991, and on November 8 an agreement was signed between the ministers of foreign affairs on starting the official contacts, still before formal diplomatic relations were established. In Warsaw and in Kiev the envoys with diplomatic status opened their offices for each country.

On December 1, 1991 the Declaration of Independence was put to the nation's approval in a referendum. At the same time the Ukrainians elected the first President of their independent state—Leonid Kravchuk, the former General Secretary of the Central Committee of Ukraine's Communist Party who turned into a nationalistic supporter of Ukraine's independence. When it turned out that Ukraine's independence had been approved by the general public (over 80% of votes in the referendum were cast in favor of the

⁵ Uchwała Sejmu RP w sprawie niepodległości Ukrainy, in: *Monitor Polski* 1991, No.29, item 205.

independence), Poland was the first country to recognize the fact on December 2, only four hours—as often emphasized by Polish politicians—after the positive result of the referendum had been made public. Full diplomatic relations were initiated on January 8, 1992 by exchanging diplomatic notes. Starting from that moment the relations between Poland and Ukraine became more official and the bilateral contacts were characterized by high intensity.

The Treaty on Good Neighbor Relations, Friendship and Cooperation

Poland and Ukraine immediately embarked on negotiations concerning a treaty between the two countries which would provide complete regulations for bilateral relations. The first round of negotiations took place on January 27–28, 1992 in Kiev, and the second one—on March 9–12 in Warsaw. Simultaneously, bilateral contacts were initiated between the ministries of national defense; these were inaugurated by a visit paid to Warsaw by the Ukrainian Minister of Defense, Konstantin Morozov on January 14, 1992. In early April talks began on the opening of military representative offices and preparations towards signing an agreement on military cooperation were under way. These steps were very important, and the more so because in Poland, just as it was in other countries, the intentions of Ukraine, a state with strong military power, reluctant to give back to Russia its nuclear weapons scheduled for cutback under the START I Treaty signed on July 1, 1991, were viewed with suspicion. None of the partners, however, had the intention to turn the emerging cooperation into some sort of a new military axis.

Intensity of negotiations concerning the bilateral political treaty between Poland and Ukraine was a result of the efforts made by the government of Jan Olszewski to sign this treaty before signing a similar one with Russia, despite the fact that the latter was basically ready since December 1991. Even the schedule of diplomatic contacts provides some interesting facts to support this opinion. Within just one week in May 1992, the President of Poland, Lech Wałsa, paid a visit to the Vatican, received the President of Ukraine, Leonid Kravchuk, in Warsaw, and then paid a visit to Moscow. Quite surprising was, in particular, the date of President Kravchuk's visit to Poland which was rescheduled for an earlier date, to take place three days before Mr. Wałsa's departure to Russia where he would go to sign the treaty between the two states.

The Treaty between Poland and Ukraine on Good Neighbor Relations, Friendship and Cooperation was signed in Warsaw by the Presidents L. Wał sa and L. Kravchuk on May 18, 1992. Both countries confirmed the inviolability of their borders (Art.2), pledged to solve any disputes between themselves by peaceful means only and renounced the use of force and the threat to use force in bilateral relations, both in the present and in the future (Art.4). The treaty created a solid base for developing bilateral cooperation in all areas and awarded comprehensive rights to ethnic minorities, the Polish minority in the Ukraine and the Ukrainian minority in Poland. Art. 11 gave minorities in both countries the right to maintain, express and develop their national and cultural identities, languages and religions, while ruling out any discrimination and giving them fully equal legal status. A new element, usually not used with respect to minorities was the consent given by both countries to financial support provided to national and cultural associations of the minorities by their compatriots living on the territory of the other party (Art. 12).⁶

Besides the significance of its contents, the importance of the Polish-Ukrainian treaty lied also in the fact that it was signed before a similar treaty was signed between Poland and Russia (May 22, 1992). By doing this, Polish state authorities wanted to accentuate the weight they attached to the issue of developing close relations with Ukraine. By regulating in this document all the matters concerning the bilateral relations, including the sensitive minority issues, they provided an indication that Poland is ready to overcome historical resentments, prejudices and stereotypes. At the same time, it is worth mentioning it here that historical resentments in the relations between Poland and Russia were more difficult to overcome. One should also think that the Polish “opening towards Ukraine” carried a strong anti-Russian message. Many statements made by the right-wing politicians ruling in Poland at that time indicated that they were inclined to build close relations with Ukraine somehow “to spite Russia”, and the more so because Moscow showed no understanding for many proposals put forward by Poland that it should make good for the historical remnants of the imperial policy of Russia and the USSR towards Poland.

⁶ Traktat mi dzy Rzecz pospolit ̄ Polsk ̄ a Ukrain ̄ o dobrym s ̄iedztwie, przyjaznych stosunkach i w̄spółpracy (The Treaty of May 18, 1992 between the Republic of Poland and Ukraine on Good Neighbor Relations, Friendship and Cooperation), Journal of Laws 1993, No. 125, items 573-574.

An important factor and at the same time the one which had a negative impact on the creation of close relations between Poland and Ukraine was the fact that both in Poland and in the Ukraine the political scene was at that time dominated by right-wing and nationalist forces (the governments of Jan Olszewski and Hanna Suchocka in Poland—until October 1993, and the presidency of Leonid Kravchuk in the Ukraine—until November 1994). The nature of the ruling forces in both countries brought them formally closer together, however, one has to keep in mind the “Russian factor” as the driving force at the background of this “get-together”. At the same time the implementation of the bilateral treaty, which as a document was rich in meaning and very modern in its statements, faced many practical problems when it came to more difficult issues of humanitarian and social cooperation. In the Ukraine it was opposed by nationalist organizations, particularly strong in the Lviv region (RUCH), while in Poland the opposition consisted of political parties such as ZChN and local authorities in the provinces (*voivodeships*) along the border.

The Strategic Partnership between Poland and Ukraine—the Concept

The bilateral treaty between Poland and Ukraine created a solid base for further development of relations between the two countries, and in the situation when problems emerged along the way it turned out to be the stabilizing element which both parties could refer to. After having signed the treaty, both countries maintained the pace and intensity of their bilateral contacts.

Not only was Poland a good neighbor for Ukraine, it was also a country that could make Ukraine’s march towards Europe easier.⁷ During the talks conducted by the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs in Kiev towards end of December 1992, Ukrainian leaders started to describe Poland as their strategic partner and assured that for Ukraine the relations with Poland were a priority.⁸

⁷ See: „Wywiad z przewodniczącym RUCHu Iwanem Draczem”, *Tygodnik Powszechny*, October 13, 1991.

⁸ *Rzeczpospolita*, December 30, 1992. During that visit on December 29, 1992 ratification documents for the bilateral treaty were exchanged. For more on Poland as Ukraine’s strategic partner see: Y. Bersheda, M. Gonchar, O. Moskalets, “Place of Poland in the Ukrainian Security Policy”, in: *Security of Poland in Changing Europe. Place of Poland in Security Policies of Neighbouring States*, Toru 1997, p. 49-70.

These important statements were made by the Ukrainian leaders at the time when they had already for several months made efforts to implement the Central European geopolitical option.⁹ The politicians in Kiev who worked closely with President Kravchuk put forward a proposal that Ukraine should join the Visegrád Group. This became the subject on which Ukrainian diplomacy focused their initiatives. Ukraine undertook talks with Poland, Hungary and Czecho-Slovakia on the subject of joining this (informal) grouping of the most advanced and most pro-Western post-Communist states.¹⁰ This was meant to make it easier to realize the aspirations, expressed by Ukrainian politicians, to integrate their country with the institutions of the Western system.¹¹ The enthusiasm of Ukrainian politicians, however, met with a very restrained or even cold response in the capital cities of their Central European neighbors. It was thought in those countries that starting a relationship with Ukraine could delay their entry into the European Community (European Union) and NATO structures. Besides, as it soon turned out, both Czecho-Slovakia and Hungary preferred to make individual efforts regarding their accession into the structures of the West.

A meaningful event in the relations between Poland and Ukraine was the discussion about the concept known as the “Kravchuk Plan”. While visiting Budapest in February 1993, the Ukrainian President presented a proposal for creating a consultative mechanism (“the Central and East European Security Zone”) which would include Ukraine, Belarus, the Baltic republics, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Moldova, Bulgaria and Austria.¹² The initiative met with cold response in the West and—despite the fact that it referred to the earlier, equally unclear, idea of NATO-bis suggested by the Polish President Lech Wał sa—it wasn’t supported by Poland. During his official visit to Kiev on May 24–26, 1993, President Wał sa didn’t take up the idea proposed by the Ukrainian President, or at least didn’t comment on it in public. An explanation for this may lie in the fact that starting from autumn

⁹ For more on Ukraine’s geopolitical options see: R. Zi ba, „Promocja interesów narodowych Ukrainy”, in: J. Stefanowicz (ed.), *Polska w Europie na przełomie wieków*, Warsaw 1997, p. 95-119.

¹⁰ P. Ko ci ski, „Ukraina z Polsk do Europy”, *Rzeczpospolita*, March 10, 1992.

¹¹ *Polska i Ukraina. Materiały z polsko-ukrai skiej konferencji naukowej, Warszawa 16-17 listopada 1992*, Warsaw 1992 (proceedings of an international conference).

¹² *To Strengthen Regional Security n Central and Eastern Europe: Initiative of Ukraine*, Embassy of Ukraine, Warsaw, Press Release, No. 3, April 1993.

1991 Poland already undertook steps towards its entry into NATO, and did not want to complicate its position by being drawn into the meanders of Ukrainian foreign policy.¹³ While declaring its interest in building close friendly relations with Ukrainian, Poland tried to avoid being drawn into numerous disputes between Kiev and Moscow. For this reason Polish foreign policy met with accusations in the West that it neglected the opportunity to create an “important strategic axis in Europe”¹⁴

However, one has to conclude that the “Kravchuk Plan” represented a rather vague concept and it didn’t win a broader support, neither domestically nor internationally. It represented an example of the search by the Ukrainian political elite for a geopolitical option favorable for their country, and at the same time it disclosed their lack of a clear foreign policy and security concept.¹⁵ It was therefore good that the Polish diplomacy didn’t join that, not entirely thought-over, Ukrainian proposal.

At the same time Warsaw clearly supported Ukraine’s efforts to join the Central European Initiative. As early as at the meeting of foreign affairs ministers of the countries included in the Central European Initiative (CEI), which took place in Vienna on July 17–18, 1992, Minister Krzysztof Skubiszewski spoke in favor of including Ukraine into this sub-regional association. Starting from that moment, Ukraine participated informally in the works of the association. Later, at the meeting of Prime Ministers of CEI countries in Warsaw in October 1995, the status of an associate member was created for the candidates, including Ukraine, and their acceptance into CEI in the near future was agreed upon. The decision was implemented on May 31, 1996, and Ukraine became a full member of CEI (along with Belarus, Romania, Bulgaria and Albania).

In the years 1993–1995, the strategic partnership between Poland and Ukraine encountered serious problems. Due to its internal problems, numerous and serious economic and social hardships, “wars at the top” between the main centers of power in the country (the President, the Parliament and the government), its disputes

¹³ However, in February next year the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Andrzej Olechowski, talked in the Sejm about Poland’s interest in taking up the dialogue on some elements of the Kravchuk Plan. See: *Materials and Documents* Vol. 3 (1994), No. 1/2, p. 336.

¹⁴ I.J. Brzeziński, “Polish-Ukrainian Relations: Europe’s Neglected Strategic Axis”, *Survival*, Vol. 35 (Autumn 1993), No. 3, p. 30.

¹⁵ See: „Ukraina – Pytania o przyszłość”, *Polska w Europie*, No. 14, 1994, p. 50-83.

with Russia and arguments with the USA and other Western countries over Ukraine's attitude towards nuclear disarmament, Ukraine could in no way represent an attractive partner for Poland.

Attempts were, however, made to give some meaning to the strategic partnership declaration. On January 12–13, 1993, during the visit to Kiev by the Prime Minister Hanna Suchocka, a package of agreements regulating economic relations was signed (including an agreement between the two governments on mutual support and protection of investment), along with the protocol on creating the Consultative Committee to the Presidents of the Republic of Poland and Ukraine. The body inaugurated its work during the visit to Ukraine by President Wał sa on May 24–26 that year. The first co-presidents appointed to the Committee were: Jerzy Milewski—for Poland, and Anton Butenko—as the representative of the Ukrainian President. The next session of the Committee took place in Warsaw in November 1993, in the next year its activities were suspended. They resumed only in April 1995.

Another attempt to give meaning to the strategic partnership concept was the formalization of military cooperation. Between January 31 and February 3, 1993, a visit to Kiev was paid by the Polish Minister of National Defense, Janusz Onyszkiewicz. The visit resulted in an agreement on cooperation signed between the ministries of defense of Poland and Ukraine; in the course of the talks, however, the Polish party touched upon the sensitive issue of the nuclear arsenal in the Ukraine.

During the official visit to Kiev by President Lech Wał sa (May 24–26, 1993) four important agreements were signed concerning various areas of cooperation. These agreements included: an agreement on legal assistance and legal relations, on readmission of people illegally crossing the Polish-Ukrainian border, on notification in case of nuclear failures and cooperation with regard to nuclear safety and radiological protection, as well as an accord on inter-regional cooperation.

Following the change of government in Poland in autumn 1993, when the left-wing SLD-PSL coalition came into power, the relations between Poland and Ukraine remained stagnant. In order to infuse them with a new momentum, during a visit to Warsaw by the chief of Ukrainian diplomacy, Anatoli Zlenko, the ministers of foreign affairs of Poland and Ukraine signed on March 21, 1994 a declaration on the rules for shaping the Polish-Ukrainian partnership. The document recognized the strategic importance of

both countries' independence, and the partnership between Poland and Ukraine was identified as a significant element in the pan-European security system. Another important document signed during the visit of Minister Zlenko to Warsaw was the bilateral accord on cooperation regarding protection of memorials and burial sites for victims of war and political persecution. Next month (April 17) Kiev was visited by the Polish Minister of National Defense, Piotr Kołodziejczyk, who was received by the head of Ukraine's defense ministry, Vitali Radetski, the Deputy Prime Minister, Valeri Shmanov and President Leonid Kravchuk. During the talks the possibilities for cooperation between Poland and Ukraine under the Partnership for Peace program were discussed.¹⁶ The stagnation in bilateral relations continued. The situation didn't change after the Minister of Foreign Affairs Andrzej Olechowski in his May 1994 exposé announced the first Eastern policy program under the heading of "Partnership for Transformation". During his visit to Kiev on November 16, 1994 Minister Olechowski declared even that Poland wished to give priority status to its relations with Ukraine. However, other statements he publicly made were perceived in the Ukraine as Poland's retreat from the position of supporting Ukraine.¹⁷

For Poland at that time the most important issue were its efforts to join NATO. At the same time it had been known that Ukraine had reservations against the need to enlarge NATO and the pace at which it was done. In November 1994, the newly elected Ukrainian President, Leonid Kuchma made a public statement about these issues. The situation was becoming awkward for Poland. Poland had to convince its "strategic partner" that its entry into NATO will not harm the interests of Ukraine, now will it weaken the pan-European security. These issues were discussed during a visit to Warsaw by the Chairman of Ukraine's Supreme Council, Oleksandr Moroz, at the end of November and beginning of December 1994, as well as during a visit to Warsaw by President Leonid Kuchma in January 1995.¹⁸ This latter visit resulted in

¹⁶ The effect of this was participation of Ukrainian soldiers in the military maneuvers "Most współpracy '94" ("Bridge of Cooperation '94")

¹⁷ Similarly negative perceptions of A. Olechowski existed also in Russia, which was a decisive factor preventing his "Partnership for Transformation" initiative from being implemented.

¹⁸ Poland has maintained its support for Ukraine's efforts to join the Central European Initiative.

mutual agreement on resuming the activities of the Consultative Committee to the Presidents.¹⁹

An improvement in Ukraine's relations with Western countries, which resulted from Kiev's decision to give back to Russia all nuclear heads and join the non-proliferation treaty (November 16, 1996), represented a factor that helped in the development of political partnership between Poland and Ukraine. Strengthening the cooperation between Ukraine and the West, first through the participation in Partnership for Peace, helped to soften the reservations against the enlargement of NATO.

Ukrainian leaders emphasized that no country has the right to veto the drive of Poland and other Central European countries towards joining NATO, at the same time, however, they expressed their concerns about the possibility to re-create the cold-war division of Europe, as a result of which Ukraine would either be pushed into a buffer zone between the two military blocks, or it would remain an isolated country between the hostile Russia and the West which could show its disinterest. That's why Ukraine was interested in searching for a compromise between NATO and Russia, which—by the way—raised criticism in Poland (the so called "Yalta syndrome"). Kiev confirmed such stand on the issue during a visit to Kiev by NATO's General Secretary on April 15, 1996. President Kuchma said that Ukraine would not oppose the enlargement of NATO (even if it had no intention of joining), provided that no nuclear weapons would be deployed on the territories of new NATO members, and the enlargement process would be carried out openly, in a transparent way and in consultation with Ukraine and Russia. The fact of having added that last, new condition indicated Ukraine's increasing anxiety about proposals expressed since autumn 1995 in Poland and the Czech Republic, concerning deployment of nuclear weapons on the territories of these countries.²⁰

In October 1995, during his visit to Warsaw the Prime Minister of Ukraine, Jevhen Marchuk, while confirming the sovereign right of the interested countries to join NATO, warned at the same time that the enlargement process should not become confrontational against Russia, as this would "bring about difficult problems and

¹⁹ However, a plenary session of the Committee didn't take place until September 27–28, 1995.

²⁰ O. Pavliuk, "Ukrainian-Polish relations: a pillar of regional stability", in: M. Wohlfeld, (ed.) "The effects of enlargement on bilateral relations in Central and Eastern Europe", *Chaillot Paper*, No. 26 (June 1997), p. 52–53.

tensions, and this would run contrary to the enlargement idea itself, as it is meant to remove tensions from Europe.”²¹ He emphasized that Ukraine did not consider Poland’s entry into NATO to be a dangerous move. In turn, Ukraine’s foreign minister, Hennadi Udovenko, added a condition that the new Central European democracies should, by becoming NATO members, influence NATO to transform itself from a “collective defense” organization into an institution of “collective security”, thus becoming the core element of a pan-European security system, encompassing all complementary and cooperating institutions.²²

The turning point in Polish-Ukrainian relations was the official visit to Poland by President Leonid Kuchma, on June 23–26, 1996. Ukraine and Poland expressed their mutual support for each other’s drive towards integration with the structures of the West. It was agreed that NATO enlargement should contribute to strengthening security across Europe. The Ukrainian leader confirmed that Ukraine didn’t oppose Poland’s entry into NATO, and he repeated the argument that each country had the right to select or change the security organization, including military alliances. He said that no country should be entitled to veto on that issue, however the interests of all European countries must be accounted for, including the “democratic Russia”. Kuchma said before the Polish Sejm and Senate that the relations between Ukraine and Poland were developing towards strategic partnership. However, the proposal to create the non-nuclear zone between the Black Sea and the Baltic, upheld by L. Kuchma, clearly pointed out that concerns about the effects of NATO enlargement still persisted in his country.

Both Presidents expressed their support for efforts made by each of their countries to join the Western structures. President Kuchma said that Ukraine awaited Poland’s help in its endeavors to join the EU, and strengthen its cooperation with NATO. He also suggested that the Weimar Triangle be expanded by incorporating Ukraine into it. Expressing his thanks to Poland for the support given to the cause of Ukraine’s entry into the Council of Europe and the Central European Initiative, as well as for the invitation to Ła cut, he also made an appeal for further support to Ukraine’s efforts to join CEFTA.

²¹ „Kijów nadrabia czas”, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, October 9, 1995.

²² H. Udovenko, “European Stability and NATO Enlargement: Ukraine’s Perspective”, *NATO Review*, No. 6, (November 1995), p. 15–18.

President Kuchma proposed that a free trade zone be created between Ukraine and Poland, which he suggested could be the first step towards reaching a similar agreement with the EU. During his visit, the governments of Poland and Ukraine signed agreements on abolishing visas²³ and on cooperation regarding protection and return of items of cultural value which had been lost or illegally moved during the World War II. The ways to implement the strategic partnership in practice were also discussed, and a decision was made that the sessions of the Consultative Committee would take place four times a year. A declaration on establishing the Polish-Ukrainian Social Forum was also signed. This non-government organization, similar in character to the Polish-German Forum which existed in the 1980s, would work towards the reconciliation of both nations.²⁴

After President Kuchma's visit to Poland, the concept of strategic partnership at the state level started to gain a broad meaning. This was served by frequent visits, numerous new agreements signed, as well as joint actions on the international forum. One may give the following examples to illustrate this trend:

- On October 10, 1996 during a visit to Kiev by the Prime Minister Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz, defense ministers of Poland and Ukraine signed an accord on mutual supply of weapons, military equipment and technical military services;
- on November 20, 1996 the Presidents of Poland, Ukraine and Lithuania made a joint protest against the authoritarian policy of President Lukashenko in Belarus, and later made efforts to draw Belarus into cross-border cooperation, both on sub-regional and state level;
- on May 20, 1997 an agreement was signed between the governments of Poland and Ukraine on cooperation in the areas of culture, science and education;
- on May 21, 1997 Presidents Kwa niewski and Kuchma signed in Kiev a joint statement on mutual agreement and reconciliation;
- on November 26, 1997 the defense ministers of Poland and Ukraine signed an agreement on creating a joint military unit

²³ It became effective on August 18, 1997.

²⁴ S.L. Wolchik, R. Zi ba, "Ukraine's Relations with the Visegrád Countries", in: S. L. Wolchik, V. Zvigliyanich, (ed.), *Ukraine: The Search for a National Identity*, New York—Oxford 2000, p. 139.

- (battalion) for participation in peace-keeping and humanitarian operations carried out by authorized international organizations;
- on January 3, 1998 during President Kwa niewski's visit to the Ukraine an accord was signed on the re-construction of the Young Eagles' Cemetery in Lviv;
 - on September 27–28, 1990, during his visit to the Ukraine, President Kwa niewski discussed with President Kuchma issues such as: the situation in the region in connection to the financial crisis in Russia and the issues of transporting the oil from the Caspian oilfields by the planned Odessa-Brody-Gdańsk pipeline;
 - on January 14–15, 1999 during Mr. Kuchma's working visit to Warsaw it was concluded that the partnership between Poland and Ukraine represented actions taken to promote democracy in the Ukraine and the development of sovereign Ukraine, as the guarantor of stability in Central and Eastern Europe;
 - on March 2–3, 1999 during an official visit to the Ukraine by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Administration and Internal Affairs, Janusz Tomaszewski, an agreement was signed on cooperation regarding fight against organized crime;
 - in 2000 there were five meetings between the Presidents of both countries, during which further strengthening of the Polish-Ukrainian partnership was declared;
 - on August 23, 2001 President Aleksander Kwa niewski took part, along Russia's President Vladimir Putin, in the celebrations of the 10th anniversary of Ukraine's independence;
 - on August 25, 2001 Prime Minister Jerzy Buzek, at the meeting of the chiefs of cabinets of Visegrád Group countries on Lake Balaton, raised the issue of the Group's cooperation with Ukraine. Even though the proposal for Ukraine's membership in the Group was not discussed, the discussion concerned the issue of regulating the cooperation between the Visegrád Group and the aspiring countries: Ukraine, Slovenia and Croatia.

These examples prove that the concept of the strategic partnership between Poland and Ukraine at the inter-state level was significantly broadened since mid-1996. A Slovak expert on Ukrainian affairs has formulated an opinion that 1996 should be considered the year of "Ukrainian Renaissance in Poland".²⁵

²⁵ A. Duleba, "Ukraine, Central Europe and Slovakia's Foreign Policy", *Slovak Foreign Policy Affairs*, Vol. 1 (Fall 2000), No. 2, p. 83.

The Strategic Partnership between Poland and Ukraine—the Sphere of Implementation

The strategic partnership between Poland and Ukraine – as we tried to prove it above—has been mainly declared and implemented by state authorities of both countries. Politicians in both countries describe the current relations between Poland and Ukraine as “the best ever in history”. If one stopped at analyzing these relations at their inter-state or inter-government level, a very high assessment could be given. However, one has to ask whether the proclaimed ideas, lofty declarations, meaningful bilateral agreements signed between the two countries and intensive contacts between the official representatives of Poland and Ukraine bring about measurable effects and are indeed implemented?

The answer to a question put in this way must neither be superficial nor simplistic. One may, on the other hand, try to present the evidence by which the implementation of the partnership between Poland and Ukraine manifests itself at the political, economic and social levels.

Political and Security Cooperation

Early start of inter-state contacts between Poland and Ukraine (already in autumn 1990) and later the fact that Poland recognized Ukraine’s independence as the first country in the world and established close political relations with the new state, represented a contribution towards strengthening Ukraine’s independence and promoted it on the international arena. One has to remember that Ukraine’s independence was doubted by experts and politicians from the leading Western countries, who made their choice in favor of a strategic partnership with Russia, and that in Russia there are many political forces that haven’t accepted the fact of Ukrainian statehood. At the same time one may conclude that the Ukrainian drive towards taking full advantage of their right to independence contributed in a decisive manner to the final collapse of the Soviet Union, and restrained the imperial tendency in the policy of Russia—the country that entered the international arena as USSR’s successor. Poland has tried to act in favor of strengthening Ukraine’s independence and eliminating rumors about the “seasonal” nature of the Ukrainian state.

Consistent political support given to Ukraine by Poland and strengthening the bilateral cooperation reinforced the pro-Euro-

pean orientation in Ukraine's foreign policy, even as, as it is known, up to mid-1996 Ukraine showed serious indecision, hesitating between various options: the neutral, the Central European and the pro-Russian option. Measurable political benefits resulting from close cooperation with Poland, along with a realistic assessment of the development trends concerning the situation in Europe, prompted Kiev to make its choice in favor of close relations, cooperation and integration with West European and Euro-Atlantic structures.

By taking up the role of Ukraine's advocate, Poland tried to introduce Ukraine to the "European high life". Warsaw supported Ukraine in its efforts to become a member of the Central European Initiative and the Council of Europe, as well as in its negotiations with international financial institutions. It was at the suggestion of President Kwa niewski that the "Charter on the Specific Partnership between NATO and Ukraine" was signed in July 1997, which should be considered to represent a step towards raising Ukraine's position in the context of signing a treaty that regulated the relations between NATO and Russia.

Thanks to the mediation of President Kwa niewski, Ukraine's President Leonid Kuchma was invited to the meeting of Presidents of Central European countries, held in Ła cut on June 7–8, 1996; since then he took part in successive meetings. Following the beginning by Poland in 1998 of the negotiations on accession to the EU, Warsaw took steps aimed at alleviating the concerns of Ukrainian politicians regarding the effects of Poland's EU membership. On February 11, 1999, a decision was made to appoint the Permanent Polish-Ukrainian Conference on European Integration, whose task is to solve problems which may arise in bilateral relations in connection with Poland's accession into EU. The Conference began its work on March 29, 1999. Warsaw has made declarations concerning special status being granted to Ukrainian travelers to Poland, so that they will not be subject to the full extent to the procedures resulting from the Schengen Treaty, besides Poland has made a commitment to share its experience with Ukraine and help it in the process of integration with the EU.

In 2000, Poland and Ukraine started their cooperation on the international forum. For example, Poland supported Ukraine's selection as the non-permanent member of the UN Security Council and supported the country in its talks with the IMF, while Ukraine gave its support to Poland in its selection as the member of the UN Human Rights Commission for the 2001–2003 term.

Both countries have supported each other in their efforts to gain a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. Poland has backed Ukraine's move towards gaining the observer status in the Council of the Baltic Sea States and gives support to its cooperation with the Visegrád Group and CEFTA.

These examples show that Poland successfully lobbies for Ukraine. By promoting and supporting Ukraine's membership in European institutions, Poland tries in this way to strengthen Ukraine's independence, as its participation on the international scene gives strength to its sovereignty. Providing support to Ukraine in the international arena represents one of the fundamental assumptions for the partnership between the two countries. Both Poland and Ukraine are well aware of the importance of their independence for bilateral contacts. The slogan that "There's no independent Poland without independent Ukraine, just as there's no independent Ukraine without independent Poland"²⁶ is often quoted by politicians on both sides of the border. In this way they refer to the Promethean ideas of the Paris *Kultura* magazine, the ideas which in the past were advocated by Juliusz Mieroszewski or Jerzy Giedroy , and now are promoted by Bohdan Osadczuk and Jerzy Kłoczowski.

A specific test for the strategic partnership between Poland and Ukraine was the open political crisis which erupted in spring 2001 in the Ukraine, when those taking part in violent street demonstrations demanded that President Kuchma step down and the law-enforcement forces loyal to the President used harsh measures against the protesters. Those events disclosed the weakness of Ukraine's political system, still far from being a democracy. At that time, which should be strongly emphasized, both parties of the conflict turned to the Polish President for mediation. On March 14 and 15 meetings took place in Kazimierz Dolny between President Kwa niewski and the representatives of both the Ukrainian opposition (on the first day) and President Kuchma (on the second day) during which methods to break the deadlock were sought. Kwa niewski persuaded his partners that they should embark on a dialog and follow the rules of democracy. Even though these talks and persuasions by the Polish President weren't entirely convincing to both parties to the conflict, they still turned out to be one of the important factors to moderate their

²⁶ See: D. Pavlichko, „Droga Ukrainy do Europy”, *Sprawy Mi dzynarodowe* 1992, No. 4/6, p. 150.

behavior.²⁷ Leonid Kuchma managed to stay in power and he still maintains close contacts, both official and personal, with Aleksander Kwa niewski. On June 3-4, 2001 they met at the IV Polish-Ukrainian Economic Forum in Dniepropietrovsk, and on June 28 both Presidents met at a consultative meeting in Ła cut, at which Kwa niewski informed his guest on the course of the visit to Poland by the US President George Bush Jr., which took place two weeks earlier. A particular, almost historic dimension, was assumed by Kwa niewski's participation in the celebrations of the 10th anniversary of Ukraine's independence. Being the leader of the country which at the moment when Ukraine prepared for its independence was still a member of the Soviet bloc and now already is a NATO member, the Polish President was invited to these celebrations alongside the President of Russia, a country which still hasn't come to terms with having lost Ukraine. This fact had a symbolic meaning. At the same time, the role of Poland and of its President personally, was recognized by Leonid Kuchma in his statement in which he said that he perceived Kwa niewski as Ukraine's main advocate in the West.

One may formulate an opinion that the political partnership between Poland and Ukraine has been implemented well, having started at the beginning of Ukraine's independence and lasting until today. It contributed significantly to strengthening Ukraine's international position and role. One may even venture an opinion that this position is today disproportionately high relative to actual capabilities of Ukraine and its not fully democratic political system. However, supporting the independent Ukraine is in the best interest of Poland. Poland needs Ukraine to feel safer, as Ukraine separates Poland from Russia—a country which quite often embarked on imperial policy and because of which, for example, Poland kept losing independence. Including Ukraine into the European value system, strengthening over its territory the rules of democracy, market economy and respect for human rights, is at the same time a guarantee that similar rules will be respected in Russia or at least that Russia's imperial ambitions will be restrained. The independent, democratic Ukraine, open to cooperation, is not only needed by Poland, it also creates a chance for providing stability across the Central and East European region, as well as across the whole continent. On the other hand, Ukraine perceives Poland as a

²⁷ The other, stronger factor was, according to observers of the Ukrainian scene, the visit of Pope John Paul II to the Ukraine in June 2001.

mediator, a “bridge” to Europe and Ukraine’s advocate on its way to Europe. The first common steps have already been made.

Similarly positive results are achieved in the military cooperation between Poland and Ukraine. This character has not only been achieved in contacts between chiefs of national defense, but also at a lower level, such as military districts or individual army units. Positive impact on the dynamics of the military cooperation between Poland and Ukraine resulted from NATO’s Partnership for Peace program. Both countries are among the most active program participants. Polish and Ukrainian army units meet at military maneuvers organized both within the PfP framework (such as: “Bridge of Cooperation ‘94”, “Peace Shield ‘96”, “Cossack Steppe”, “Brave Eagle” etc.) and within the framework of bilateral cooperation, e.g. common maneuvers of the Cracow Military District “Tatra Mountains ‘96”. In 1996, Poland and Ukraine started preparations for cooperation regarding research and development of weapons. In January 1998 the common Polish-Ukrainian Battalion was ready for deployment, and in July 2000 the Battalion was sent for a year to Kosovo to serve as part of the KFOR forces there. This last example shows that Poland and Ukraine try to contribute together to the peace and security in the regions destabilized by ethnic conflicts, which wins a positive assessment and proves that the implementation of the partnership between Poland and Ukraine is beneficial not only to both countries but to the whole international community as well.

And what goes on with the cooperation between Poland and Ukraine in other areas, where the decisive voice belongs to the general public in both countries?

Economic Relations

The fundamental treaties for the economic relations between Poland and Ukraine were created simultaneously with the numerous political agreements. They began with the inter-government agreement, signed on April 4, 1991, on trade and economic cooperation. The agreement didn’t become effective until March 11, 1994, therefore it turned out at the very beginning that the cooperation in this area will not be easy. However, a number of institutions have been created, with the purpose to promote, coordinate and develop economic relations. The most important among these are: Polish-Ukrainian Chamber of Industry (*Polsko-Ukrai ska Izba Przemysłowa*), Polish-Ukrainian Joint

Commission for Economic Cooperation and Trade, (*Polsko-Ukrai ska Komisja Mieszana ds. Współpracy Gospodarczej i Handlu*), Polish-Ukrainian Chamber of the Construction Industry and Trade (*Polsko-Ukrai ska Izba Przemysłowo-Handlowa Budownictwa*), Ukrainian-Polish Center for Support and Development of Management, Entrepreneurship and Investment (*Ukrai sko-Polskie Centrum Wspierania Rozwoju Zarz dzania, Przeds i biorczo ci i Inwestycji*). Specific attention should be paid to the fact of establishing, on October 29, 1998, a trilateral Polish-American-Ukrainian Cooperation Initiative (PAUCI), whose task is to provide assistance to small businesses and local self-government units in order to support macroeconomic reforms. The parties to this initiative are government agencies, non-government organizations, private companies and celebrities from the three countries.

Apart from institutionalized forms of cooperation, events that promote trade and economic cooperation between Poland and Ukraine are frequently organized. Among these one may list trade fairs (e.g. Lviv Eastern Fairs), Polish-Ukrainian Economic Summits (taking place in turn in Rzeszów and Dniepropietrovsk) and discussion forums (such as the Poland-East Economic Forum in Krynica).

Over the period 1992–1997 the trade between Poland and Ukraine increased six times, reaching the level of USD 1,622.3 thousand. To these figures one should add about 30–40% of unregistered cross-border trade (“the gray economy”). The financial crisis in Russia in autumn 1998 had a negative impact on the Ukrainian economy, weakening the trade between Ukraine and Poland as a result. In 2000 the trade between the two countries reached just over USD 1.2 bn.²⁸

The situation is not helped by the fact that the presence of Polish investors in the Ukraine is still weak. Over 800 companies with Polish capital have their representative offices in the country; in total these companies invested only USD 56 million (which accounts for only 1.4% of total foreign investment in the Ukraine). On the other hand, Ukrainian investment in Poland amounts to only USD 250 thousand.²⁹ Prospective investors are scared away by Ukraine’s high inflation, lack of ownership guarantees, extensive tax system, corruption,

²⁸ In the first half of 2001 trade between Ukraine and Poland reached USD 633 million. Source: The Embassy of Ukraine in Warsaw.

²⁹ Data obtained from the Embassy of Ukraine in Warsaw.

inability to purchase land, complicated and ever-changing regulations, lack of credit insurance, bureaucracy in Ukraine's economic life. Investment risk is aggravated by uncertain economic situation, and recently also by political instability (the conflict between the President and the opposition). Serious limitations result also from the low financial potential of both countries and their recurrent state budget problems. All of this leads to a situation that Polish-Ukrainian economic relations can't develop in accordance with politicians' expectations nor with both countries' needs.

Poland and Ukraine work also together on joint economic projects. Since 1997 preparations are under way to build a transportation corridor Odessa-Brody-Gda sk, possibly branching out to Berlin. The project forecasts a fast railway connection, a highway and a pipeline, which would make it possible to deliver oil from the Caspian Sea to the West, by-passing the Turkish straits and Mediterranean Sea. The most advanced phase has been reached by the part of the project concerned with the pipeline construction. This project has a strategic importance because it creates for Ukraine an opportunity to cut its dependence on Russian oil supply. Poland supports the project. However, in 2000 problems emerged when Russia and the EU reached agreement on building the second line of the Yamal gas pipeline, going through Poland but by-passing Ukraine. The Polish government of Jerzy Buzek, driven by "concern about Ukraine's interests", but in fact playing another game with Russia, was ready to forgo the income on the transfer of the Russian gas (USD 1 bn annually) and tried to block the construction of the gas pipeline from Russia. In numerous statements, the representatives of the Polish government refused to give their consent to accepting the pipeline on the Polish territory should it threaten Ukraine's interests. However, they were alone in doing this, because Western politicians backed the contract between the EU and Russia. This shows that Ukraine must help itself and reach an agreement with Russia. This doesn't mean that the chances to build the Odessa-Gda sk pipeline don't exist any more, these, however, depend first of all on sufficient sources of financing to be provided by Poland and Ukraine.

Since 1993, Ukraine makes efforts to join the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA), these efforts being warmly welcome by Poland. However, success in this case has been difficult to achieve, because Ukraine—neglecting its economic reforms³⁰—is

³⁰ See: T. Kuzio, J.D.P. Moroney, "Ukraine and the West: Moving From Stability to Strategic Enganement", *European Security* Vol. 10 (Summer 2001), No. 2, p. 115–117.

unable to meet the economic criteria obligatory in CEFTA. This has become even more important as the CEFTA members which have signed association treaties with the EU can't give preferential treatment to Ukraine. This is yet another example which shows that when economic interests come into play, the strategic partnership does not work.

Poland and Ukraine develop their cross-border cooperation, coordinated by the Regional Center for Cross-Border Cooperation (*Regionalne Centrum Współpracy Transgranicznej*—established in 1992) and the Inter-Government Coordination Council for Inter-Regional Cooperation (*Mi dzyrz dowa Rada Koordynacyjna do spraw Współpracy Mi dzynarodowej*—established in 1996). The most widely known forms of this type of cooperation are: the Carpathian Euroregion and the Bug Euroregion. The first Euroregion was created based on the agreement signed on February 14, 1993 in Debrecen (Hungary), and the second one—based on the agreement of September 29, 1995 signed in Lutsk (Ukraine). The Carpathian Euroregion covers almost the whole *podkarpackie* and part of the *malopolskie* voivodeships (South-Eastern Poland), Ukrainian districts located in the West and South-West of the country, as well as adjacent districts of Romania, Slovakia and Hungary. The River Bug Euroregion consists on the Polish side of the border of the *lubelskie* voivodeship, as well as part of the *wi tokrzyskie* and *mazowieckie* voivodeships, and—on the Ukrainian side—of the North-West districts of the country.

Cooperation within Euroregions is carried out between state administration bodies and local self-government units, with the objective to work towards the benefit of the local community. Working teams work on problems such as: urban development, transportation, ecology, prevention of and rescue in the event of natural disasters, developing contacts between residents, education, health service, culture, sport, recreation and tourism. In the opinion of those who participate in this cooperation, Euroregions also contribute towards international stability and safety.³¹

An important supplement to the cooperation carried out in the Euroregions are direct contacts between Polish and Ukrainian cities: Lublin and Lviv, as well as Lutsk, Cracow and Kiev. This form of cross-border cooperation facilitates closer and better

³¹ *Role of the Carpathian Euroregion in Strengthening Security and Stability in Central and Eastern Europe*, Prešov—Yzhgorod 2001.

contacts between local communities. This help to overcome prejudice and historical grievances and stereotypes, which are so important for Polish-Ukrainian relations. Even though these contacts are often accompanied by illegal cross-border trade, interpersonal relationships shape the real partnership “at the roots”, between communities. New social bonds are created which represent a more permanent link in the partnership between Poland and Ukraine and are more important for “ordinary” people than the partnership declared “from the top” between politicians.

Relations Concerning Humanitarian Issues

The aspects which have vital importance for the partnership between Poland and Ukraine are the cooperation regarding ensuring and protecting the rights of minorities, supporting broadly defined contacts between both societies and protecting the cultural heritage.

The first issue dealt with by the authorities of Poland and Ukraine is the issue of ethnic Polish and Ukrainian minorities living on the territory of the other state. According to the official data, at the beginning of the 1990s Poland disclosed the number of Ukrainians living in Poland as 219 thousand. As if in response, the official Ukrainian data disclosed the same number of ethnic Poles living in the Ukraine.³² Currently, at the beginning of the 21st century, Ukrainian politicians give the number of 300 thousand Poles in the Ukraine. These figures are contested by various Polish communities, and some sources close to the Catholic Church tell even about 600 thousand to 1 million Poles living in the Ukraine. The issue is more complicated, because one has to take into consideration significant mixing of ethnic Poles with the Ukrainians and Russians living in the Ukraine. And what is of the greatest importance it is the fact that the majority of Poles who lived in the Soviet republic of Ukraine were in the Stalin era subjected to harsh persecution, including deportations to Kazakhstan and terror, and then—during the World War II—they suffered pogroms at the hands of Ukrainian nationalists. All of this resulted in a situation when part of the remaining Polish community gave up their claims to the Polish nationality, just to survive. On the other hand the Ukrainian ethnic minorities which found itself on the Polish territory after the World War II, were persecuted in

³² A. Hlebowicz, „Sytuacja Polaków na Ukrainie”, *Biuletyn Ukrai ski* 1994, No. 6/7, p. 15-20.

retaliation for their support for the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) and under the project known under the “Vistula” code they were resettled and scattered over Northern and Western Poland.

At the beginning of the 1990s, when Poland and Ukraine started their close cooperation, the problem of ethnic minorities was presented as one of the first problems to be solved. This, however, proved to be more difficult than sheer goodwill and modern text of the May 1992 treaty on good neighbor relations, friendship and cooperation. Before these stipulations were enforced, it was necessary to take an official stance on the issue of mutual grievances and historical wrongdoings. However, the actions taken were limited, and none of the parties was satisfied. On August 3, 1990, the Senate of the Republic of Poland passed a resolution in which they officially condemned the “Vistula” project and announced that the wrongs resulting from the project would be corrected.³³ The document met with positive welcome in the Ukraine, which was reflected in the Supreme Council’s resolution of October 9, 1990.³⁴ However, part of the political community in the Ukraine and the Ukrainians living in Poland believe that a similar act of expiation on the part of the Polish Sejm is still missing and that the resettlement program hasn’t been properly accounted for in Poland. Voices can be heard in the Ukrainian nationalist circles that Poland should make it possible for those resettled to reclaim their assets or even make it possible for them to come back to the land which has been taken over by Poles.³⁵ On the other hand, the Polish war veterans and some right-wing political parties request Ukraine to condemn the pacification of the Volyn region during the Nazi occupation, collaboration of Ukrainians with the Nazi occupant in suppressing the Warsaw Uprising and other atrocities against Poles committed on the former South-Eastern Territories of Poland (*Kresy*) and by the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) after the World War II.³⁶ The claims on both sides show how painful the memories of some events in the shared history of both nations still are, and how difficult it is to change the mutual

³³ See: *Ukrainy w Polsce 1989-1993. Kalendarium. Dokumenty. Informacje*, Warsaw 1993, p.130-131.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ See: W. Gill, N. Gill, *Stosunki Polski z Ukrainą w latach 1989-1993*, Toru 1993, p. 23; A. S. Komariewskij, S. Pirozhkov, *Stosunki polsko-ukraińskie. Spojrzenie z Ukrainy/Polsko-ukraiński widnoscii. Pogląd z Ukrainy*, Toru 1995, p. 8-10.

³⁶ See: M. Cieplik, „Stosunki polsko-ukraińskie”, *Rocznik Polskiej Polityki Zagranicznej* 1992, p. 140.

attitudes of both nations, which remains a condition necessary for partnership building at the level of communities.

Being aware of these facts, the Presidents of Poland and Ukraine, Aleksander Kwa niewski and Leonid Kuchma, in their joint statement on agreement and reconciliation (of May 21, 1997) concluded that Poland and Ukraine would undertake to take care of minorities living on their territories and support their development, and they also made an appeal to broaden interpersonal contacts, which they identified as an “important factor in building close relations between Poland and Ukraine”.

Taking care of and protecting memorials and burial sites for victims of war and political persecution represents another issue important for the settlement of historical accounts. These issues are regulated in a bilateral agreement signed by both governments on March 21, 1994. However, the implementation of this agreement still meets with major difficulties. Up to this day, in spite of separately signed agreements, the Polish Young Eagles’ Cemetery in Lviv still awaits its reconstruction, the Ukrainian party doesn’t willingly give information on all locations on the Ukraine territory where Poles were persecuted and killed, there were cases of vandalism at the Young Eagles’ Cemetery (*Cmentarz Orł t Lwowski*). Examples of similar behavior of local communities and local self-government authorities can also be found in Poland: there were instances when approval was not given for the reconstruction of the cemeteries of Ukrainian minority in the region of Podkarpacie (at the base of the Carpathian Mountains) or for building memorials for UPA soldiers.

Problems also emerge when it comes to ensuring the rights of minorities, especially with regard to education, schooling, promoting readership and supporting cultural activities. As both countries lack funds for these objectives, it creates dissatisfaction among the minorities. Frequently difficulties arise in implementing the valid requests, such as those regarding the development of schools where classes will be held in minorities’ mother tongue, because of the fact that both the Poles in the Ukraine and the Ukrainians in Poland are scattered all over the countries’ territories. Even with the utmost goodwill of local authorities it is impossible to satisfy some minority communities.

An important factor in reaching the reconciliation between the Poles and the Ukrainians are the studies by historians in both countries aimed at harmonizing the history textbooks. Władysław

Serczyk gives the following assessment of this process: “The findings of Polish scholars are constantly being questioned by their Ukrainian counterparts, and on the other hand the opinions expressed by the Ukrainians are disapproved by the Poles. One can hardly be surprised by this, because the true history of the Polish-Ukrainian border in the 1940s is equally damaging to the idealized image of the defenders of the Polish Eastern Border Territories (*Kresy*) and the image of brave fighters for free and independent Ukraine.”³⁷ Polish intellectuals, especially those who come from former dissident organizations represent a “sentimental attachment” to the people and culture of the Ukraine (as well as Lithuania and Belarus).³⁸ On the one hand, this makes it easier for the Polish government to show interest in the East, but on the other hand, the views held on the Eastern nations, often too patronizing, do not make it easy to cooperate on a social level. Varying assessment of the past among the scholars and cultural elite, is reflected in an even deeper preoccupation with history and stereotypes created against this background in the minds of the general public, which obviously makes contacts between the two nations even more difficult. The worst situation is in the Polish-Ukrainian border region. In Przemy 1, the atmosphere of the threat caused by Ukrainian expansion constantly comes back to life. Many people feel anxiety and, later, fear. In Lviv the “Polish threat” syndrome is still present.³⁹ These fears prompt local communities to issue threats against the alleged enemy. In Przemy 1, anti-Ukrainian slogans appear on the walls along with drawings of trident on the gallows. The simmering ethnic conflict is overlaid upon the religious differences. The Poles perceive the members of the Orthodox or Uniate Churches as the Ukrainians, or the “Ruthenian folk”. On the other hand, the Ukrainians see the equivalence of being Polish and Catholic. Against this background conflicts arise. In 1992 in Przemy 1 there was a shameful conflict about the St. Theresa’s Church. The Ukrainians protested against the reconstruction of the dome of this formerly Uniate church by the local Catholic Church authorities.⁴⁰ The conflict became so

³⁷ „Nietoleracja i niepami ”, *Wprost*, 1998, No. 30, p. 65.

³⁸ S.R. Burant, “International Relations in a Regional Context: Poland and Its Eastern Neighbors—Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine”, *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 45 (1993), No. 3, p. 410.

³⁹ J. Wilczak, „Starcia w terenie”, *Polityka*, 1997, No. 28, p. 18.

⁴⁰ See: A. Bołkun, „Przemy 1—centrum polskiego idiotyzmu”, *Biuletyn Ukrai ski* 1995, No. 6, p. 22.

notorious, that even the Pope John Paul II became involved in mediation.

A separate problem which makes the reconciliation between the Poles and Ukrainians more difficult, and which has its roots both in history and in the present day, is the activity of the Catholic Church in the Ukraine, supported by the Polish Episcopate. Anxious feelings arise in the Ukraine after the Holy See declared it a "mission country". This is being perceived as an attempt to polonize the Ukrainians, which stirs up old fears and the feeling of being threatened by the Polish culture. The strongest protests are being voiced by the Orthodox Church governed by the Moscow Patriarchate, but the fears affect also the average Ukrainian. It is true that the Ukrainian visit of the Pope John Paul II in June 2001, alleviated a large part of these fears, however, they still remain in the minds of a large part of the Ukrainian population, because they have taken strong roots over generations. These fears are being fuelled by the Moscow Orthodox Church which feels threatened in the Ukraine, and this makes us perceive a Russian factor even in such delicate matters. This happens so because Ukraine is the country which the followers of the "great Russia" would like to see within the borders of their empire. Today one can see that the issue of building the partnership between Poland and Ukraine "at the bottom" also touches upon the fundamental issue of the national identity of the Ukrainians themselves and the attempts to shape their identity in the context of the fundamental challenge, in which the future of this part of USSR's former "internal empire" is at stake. Therefore, we have to deal here with a broader, complex problem which should become a subject of a separate analysis.

For the development of the partnership between the societies of Poland and Ukraine, an important factor would also be the cooperation concerning culture. The Ukrainian party approached this subject very cautiously, which was proved by lack of consent to have it regulated by way of an agreement. It was only during the breakthrough visit of President Kuchma to Warsaw that an inter-government agreement was signed (on June 25, 1996) on cooperation regarding protection and return of items of cultural value which had been lost or illegally moved during the World War II, and in the next year (on May 20, 1997) a general agreement was signed on cooperation in the areas of culture, science and education.

For Poland, which left a significant part of its cultural heritage on the territory of today's Ukraine, cultural cooperation represents an

important issue, because it concerns either reclaiming items of cultural value or giving Poles access to the heritage left by their ancestors, as well as preserving—as the cultural heritage of the world—those cultural achievements which at some time were created by Poles and today are left in the Ukraine. Cooperation in the areas of culture, science, education and information exchange is important for both countries because of general reasons—as a factor in creating new bonds between the societies of Poland and Ukraine, and because of the importance of such cooperation for ensuring and protecting the rights of ethnic minorities.

In order to strengthen the partnership between Poland and Ukraine it is important that efforts be made to promote the cultural heritage and artistic values of each party to the other. For this purpose the Institute of Polish Culture in the Ukraine was established, which began its operations in Kiev on January 27, 1999—informally (because an agreement on this issue hasn't been signed yet). The Institute quickly “made its mark in the calendar of important cultural events not only in the capital city, but also in other cities, such as: Vinnitsa, Lviv, Kolomyia, Kremenets or Odessa and has gained a permanent location on Ukraine's cultural map”.⁴¹ A similar institute is to be established by Ukraine in Poland. The opening of a Polish bookstore in Kiev and an Ukrainian one in Poland still remain in the sphere of plans.

Joint celebrations to commemorate important anniversary dates are organized, as well as other cultural events. As an example one may mention here the 150th birth anniversary of Juliusz Słowacki, inaugurated on February 4, 1999 by the celebrations held at the King's Castle in Warsaw, attended by the representatives of the Polish Prime Minister, the Minister of Culture as well as the Ukrainian Minister of Culture (and the Lithuanian Vice Minister of Culture); the opening of the first Słowacki Museum outside Poland (in Kremenets) was scheduled for the beginning of September 2002. In return, events were organized in Poland to promote the works of Danilo Danitski and Taras Shevtshenko.⁴² Closer cooperation between the nations is also helped by organizing Festivals of Ukrainian Culture in Poland, the Reviews of Ukrainian Films, sessions conducted under the title of “Meetings with the Ukrainian

⁴¹ Z. Szmyd, „Stosunki Z Ukrain ”, *Rocznik Polskiej Polityki Zagranicznej*, 2000, p. 191.

⁴² Other examples of recognizing in Poland the poetry and paintings of Taras Shevtshenko are: giving Shevtshenko's name to a square in Warsaw and unveiling the memorial of the artist on December 1, 2001.

culture”, performances given by Ukrainian theatres in Poland, and similar events organized in the Ukraine for the Polish culture. An important role in the sphere of the cultural and scientific relations is played by institutions such as: The Central and Eastern Europe Institute (*Instytut Europy rodkowo-Wschodniej*) in Lublin, East European Studies (*Studium Europy Wschodniej*) at the Warsaw University, Cracow’s St. Vladimir Foundation (*Fundacja w. Włodzimierza*) and the South-Eastern Research Institute (*Południo-wo-Wschodni Instytut Naukowy*) in Przemy l.

There’s good cooperation in the filmmaking industry, of which the best known example was the film based on the novel by Henryk Sienkiewicz *By Fire and By Sword* (*Ogniem i mieczem*), directed by Jerzy Hoffman. The film was made in co-production with Ukraine and later it met with strong approval of the cinemagoers in the Ukraine. There were even opinions published in the print media that the film did more for overcoming mutual prejudice and promoting closer Polish-Ukrainian relations than most official visits and declarations made by politicians.

There are no major successes in the field of scientific cooperation, but there are chances for the future, as some foundations have already been laid. Things were made easier, for example, by the agreement of May 18, 1992 on mutual recognition of education and academic degrees and titles, and the European College of the Polish and Ukrainian Universities (*Europejskie Kolegium Uniwersytetów Polskich i Ukrai skich*) has been established by six academic institutions from Lublin, Lviv and Kiev. The College, which in the future is to be transformed into a Polish-Ukrainian university, inaugurated its operations on October 6, 2001 in Lublin. The Presidents Kwa niewski and Kuchma, both present at the celebration, emphasized that the College will be the expression of “the practical implementation of the strategic partnership between both countries”. In its first academic year, the College accepted over 100 students taking their PhD courses, mainly from the Ukraine.⁴³

A serious impediment in the development of bilateral cooperation in the field of science and research is a bad financial position of the Ukrainian science, with that of the Polish science being just slightly better. Besides, Ukrainian scholars are first of all interested in travelling to the West or starting cooperation with those foreign scientific and research institutes that have the ability

⁴³ „Pod patronatem Giedroycia”, *Rzeczpospolita*, October 8, 2001.

to offer financial support. On the other hand, Polish scientific community does not see any attractive partners in the Ukraine.

Therefore, if one took a general view of the implementation of the agreements on the cooperation between Poland and Ukraine in the areas of culture, science and related fields, it would have to be concluded that positive trends don't prevail. The unsolved issues of Polish-language education in the Ukraine and Ukrainian-language education in Poland still represent major impediments, along with lack of adequate financial help and adequate locations for the Polish ethnic minority in the Ukraine, inadequate care of the Polish cultural heritage in the Ukraine, persistent mutual prejudice and stereotypes—especially in Western Ukraine and in the South-East of Poland, all of which hamper the development of cooperation within Euroregions or partnership ties between cities and districts along the border.

Final Conclusions

Poland was very sympathetic towards Ukraine's efforts to leave the USSR and, when this became a fact, Poland was the first country in the world to recognize Ukraine's independence. In its initiatives towards Ukraine, Poland tried to act in favor of strengthening its independence and pro-European orientation. Ukraine, on the other hand, perceived Poland (and still does) to be its "bridge" to the Western Europe, and even its advocate in the European and Euro-Atlantic institutions. The partnership established between the two countries was beneficial for Polish security interests, as it restrained and blocked Russia's imperial ambitions and, consequently, contributed to the stabilization of international situation in Central and Eastern Europe as well as over the whole continent.

In May 1992 Poland and Ukraine signed a treaty which was instrumental in shaping their bilateral relations—the treaty on good neighbor relations, friendship and cooperation. The treaty created a solid base for developing bilateral cooperation in all areas, confirmed the inviolability of borders between the two countries and regulated in a modern way the issues of ethnic minorities—Polish in the Ukraine and Ukrainian in Poland.

The concept for development of the relations between Poland and Ukraine which followed afterwards, sketched a broad cooperation program in various areas and at various levels: the

state and the social level. Because of the fact that the concept included in its contents issues related to the implementation, through close contacts and cooperation, of vital national interests of both countries, such as strengthening the independence and security, building a democratic political system, respecting human rights, including the rights of ethnic minorities, the concept earned the name of a strategic partnership.

The implementation of this concept has been most successfully carried out at the state level, and it manifests itself best in intensive and close bilateral political relations and the cooperation between Poland and Ukraine on the international forum. Taking the role of an advocate for Ukrainian affairs in the West by Poland, has helped to strengthen the pro-European orientation in Ukraine's politics and raised the international position of Ukraine in European and Euro-Atlantic structures. It is in the cooperation on the political and security issues where the practical implementation of the strategic partnership has to be considered most effective.

This cooperation implemented "from the top", mainly by the leaders of both countries creates impulses for developing cooperation on a social level, despite the fact that at this level serious problems and challenges remain to be tackled and solved. Economic cooperation is certainly not at a strategic level; trade between the two countries remains poor and the investments made by Polish capital in the Ukraine, and vice versa, are almost nonexistent. The main obstacles here are created by the disproportionate level of development and reform in the economies of both countries. Ukrainian still represents a definitely less attractive partner for Polish business, while also creating still significant risk for merchants and investors.

Finally, the most difficult aspects of the relations between Poland and Ukraine are to be found among the humanitarian issues, which touch upon the questions of ethnic minorities, historical settlements, reclaiming items that belong to cultural heritage, cultural exchange, education, exchange of information and cooperation in the area of science. That's why there are no major successes in these areas, and any achievements to date are far from adequate considering the needs of both nations and the expectations of both countries' leaders. Many declarations, initiatives and programs agreed upon between the Polish and Ukrainian leaders linger on as mere concepts or they are not reliably implemented. There are many reasons behind this, with the most important ones including: lack of Polish-Ukrainian

reconciliation at the social level, persisting negative stereotypes, or unfamiliarity with and indifference towards the other party as well as low attractiveness of both parties to each other (despite the fact that, generally speaking, the Poles are considered by the Ukrainians to be attractive partners, almost as good as Western European nations).

Therefore one may conclude that there is a correlation between the two levels at which the partnership between Poland and Ukraine is being built: at the inter-state level where it has the nature of a strategic choice, and at the social level—where good contacts or successful contracts and businesses are still few and far between, and cooperation between neighbors is still poor. It is a cliché, often repeated by the supporters of the partnership between Poland and Ukraine, that in order to make it real and effective, the process must include ordinary people—the citizens of both countries—and not only the prominent central and local government figures. Maybe, though, the first phase of the cooperation between Poland and Ukraine could hardly be much better, and whatever politicians do today—it ultimately leads to the true partnership between both nations?

Source: *Rocznik Nauk Politycznych 2002*, p. 55–77.