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On peoples, history, and sovereignty

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ABSTRACT

The article opens with materials from the author's research among east Slavs in Poland: a close-up portrayal of villagers classified as Ukrainians in the Polish People's Republic, some of whom had no developed national consciousness; and an equally brief account of a postsocialist project in a nearby city, in which the boundaries between rival peoples were clearly drawn. Explanations for inconsistencies between individuals and enduring tensions between groups must be sought in the complicated history of this ethnic borderland. Collective identities and *peoplehood* are plastic. Outcomes are shaped by many factors: language and religion are fundamental, but account must also be taken of the contingencies of imperial politics, violence, industrialization, and the aspirations of intellectuals. The distinction between historical and non-historical peoples is found to be useful, but neither Ernest Gellner's theory of nationalism nor conventional accounts of colonialism have much traction in this case. The implicit presentism of those who sacralize state boundaries at one point in time in the name of "sovereignty" has affinities with the functionalist presentism developed by Bronisław Malinowski in very different, non-European contexts. While that paradigm has few adherents nowadays, Malinowski's posthumous critique of the state and "political sovereignty" is salutary for understanding the ongoing catastrophe in Ukraine.

KEYWORDS

Bronisław Malinowski; Ernest Gellner; nationalism; peoplehood; Poland; Ukraine

> Nationalism today is one of the main curses of humanity. (Malinowski 1944, 271)

Introduction

Between 1979 and 1981 I carried out field research in Southeast Poland (Hann 1985) in which I paid close attention to several families whose members, though called Ukrainians by their neighbours and classified as such by the People's Republic, did not uniformly embrace this identity. I shall outline these disagreements in the first section of this article with reference to old field notes. In the background is the following question: if significant numbers of east Slavs in Southeast Poland and adjacent regions of the Carpathians express a preference to be recognized as Lemkos or Carpatho-Rusyns rather than as a component of the Ukrainian nation, how exactly does such a position differ from that

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of the patriotic Ukrainian who rejects membership of an even more encompassing east Slav people including Russians and Belarussians? In short, what is peoplehood, and what is a nation? Tensions around these questions in East-Central Europe took on new form following the collapse of socialist regimes. I summarize a post-socialist urban project in the same region of Poland where, despite violence in the not so distant past, in recent decades Polish-Ukrainian relations have been free of antagonism. But the case of Ukraine itself, which is currently being contested through violence, is a tragedy that remains poorly understood.

In the rest of the paper, I delve deeper into the question of how anthropologists can contribute to bitterly politicized debates, beyond simply reporting from their field sites. Scholars of international law, politics and international relations are prominent among those sought after by the mass media to offer insight into the war that began in 2022 and shows no sign of ending. The public expects to be informed concerning definitions of sovereignty, human rights, geopolitical rivalries, economic consequences, and so on. Historians may be consulted for their specialist expertise, ranging from migrations in past centuries to inter-ethnic conflict and insidious assimilation policies in more recent generations. But on what basis of expertise should the anthropologist be invited to interdisciplinary conferences or encouraged to submit op-ed pieces to influential media outlets?

The answers I give in this article are personal, though I try throughout to engage with the norms of the discipline. I am particularly interested in probing the tension between what socio-cultural anthropology teaches concerning the factual plasticity of collective identity, and the concept of a *people* as popularly understood and subjectively experienced in the age of nationalism: an identity that trumps all other forms of belonging emotionally and is thought to endure immutably. To this end, in the section that follows my ethnography, I take up a distinction well known to historians and other specialists in Eastern Europe, namely that between historical peoples and "young" peoples, those "without history." The case of Ukraine and its relation to its neighbours is instructive. Russia and Poland formerly ruled large swathes of today's Ukraine as imperial powers. But only Poland now seems willing to accept Ukraine as a structural equivalent, a fully sovereign European nation-state according to the dominant identity grammar of our era (see Baumann and Gingrich 2004). Another aspect of the plasticity of collective identities to which I pay attention in this section concerns the patterns of migration characteristic of industrial society. Drawing critically on the work of Ernest Gellner, who was raised in Central Europe, I suggest an analogy between the transformation of the Donbas in the nineteenth century and that which began a little earlier in my native South Wales.

After these *excursi* into the past, in the final substantive section of the paper I turn to contributions to theory and method made by another influential anthropologist whose roots are in Central Europe. Shortly before his death, when the Second World War was raging in the region that concerns us, Bronisław Malinowski questioned the most basic assumptions of Western political theory concerning sovereignty and freedom. It is well known that Malinowski was a vigorous opponent of Stalinist totalitarianism; his more general critique of political nationalism can be construed as an anthropological approach to international relations that is as relevant today as it was in the 1940s.

Ethnogaphic Research in Southeast Poland

Even before wrapping up my doctorate about rural Hungary in the late 1970s, I was encouraged by Jack Goody, my supervisor in Cambridge, to embark on a new project in Poland. I have explained elsewhere how serendipity led me to investigate a valley in the Beskid Mountains that had been colonized by Polish peasants in the 1950s. Prior to their deportation in 1947, this valley had been occupied almost exclusively by east Slavs (Hann 1985, 2016). In a zone of the Carpathians that was roughly one hundred miles in width, with no obvious linguistic or religious boundary at its eastern end and extending south across the ridge of the mountains into Slovakia, the Cracow ethnographer Roman Reinfuss had identified the Lemkos (*Łemkowie*) in the 1930s as an "ethnographic group" (*grupa etnograficzna*) (Reinfuss 1948-9). However, this collective identity was by no means everywhere embraced on the ground. In the eastern districts, where the village of Wisłok Wielki was located, a pro-Ukrainian orientation was strong. This had been demonstrated by events in 1918–9, when their Greek Catholic priest proclaimed a Ukrainian republic in the neighbouring village of Komańcza. In other districts, however, at least according to Polish ethnographers, the Ukrainian orientation was weak or non-existent. Ecclesiastical loyalties were also fuzzy. From the mid-nineteenth century, the Greek Catholic Church was strongly connected to the Ukrainian national cause (Himka 1999). Partly due to complex dynamics in the North American diaspora, some congregations in the Lemko zone converted back to Orthodoxy from the Greek Catholicism they had espoused since the seventeenth century. The Polish authorities in the inter-war decades had no wish to encourage an orientation towards either Ukraine or Russia. Ethnographers emphasized distinctive features in dialects, architecture and pastoral economy which taken together warranted classifying these highlanders as a distinctive group. We do not know how many *Łemkowie* ever embraced the ethnonym bestowed on them externally, or were even aware of it. The highest level of collective self-designation in the period when Reinfuss carried out his fieldwork seems to have been *Rusnak*. Like other east Slavs, these Rusnaks were subject to strong Polonization pressures throughout the inter-war period (Pasieka 2021).

Many Carpathian east Slavs, including inhabitants of the central and western Lemko zones who had not embraced the Ukrainian cause, were resettled in Ukraine in 1945. Two years later, almost all of those who remained were deported to former German territories of the new People's Republic of Poland. *Akcja Wisła* was the new regime's emphatic response to several years of "terrorist" activity by UPA, the Ukrainian nationalist guerrilla movement inspired by Stepan Bandera. This was a continuation of the inter-ethnic violence that ravaged communities in Wolhynia in 1943, in the course of which as many as 100,000 ethnic Poles were murdered by Ukrainians. Reclassified by the People's Republic as members of a Ukrainian (not Lemko) minority, most of the east Slavs who remained within Polish borders became permanent residents of the locations where they were resettled in the north and west of the country. Some found their way to North America. But, from the end of the 1950s onwards, some were able to return to the homeland in the mountains. When I went to live there in 1979, Wisłok Wielki had six or

seven such households, barely 10 per cent of the total, all located at the upper end of the valley. These east Slavs did not want to talk about their experience of *Akcja Wisła* in 1947, or the violence that preceded it. One man I knew well had lost his two daughters when his house was burned down by the Polish army. It had not been easy to return to the village after years of exile. They were unable to re-possess their old houses. All experienced negative stereotyping from the Poles who had taken over their houses and their fields, which replicated the negative images that prevailed in the wider society. But I did not dig deeper into these issues. My project focused on the socio-economic conditions of the settlement (the aim being an analytic comparison with rural development strategies in Hungary). I devoted an early chapter of my monograph to the complex history of the Lemko-Ukrainians, but the minority did not figure prominently in the main body of the book (Hann 1985).

Wasyl Szariak (as he asked to be photographed in front of his home, 1981)

Mariya Szariakowa, 1981

One of the Ukrainian households I called on frequently was that that of Bazyli (Wasyl) and Mariya Szariak. Wasyl was born in 1917. Or perhaps in 1921. Thin and wiry, he liked to joke with me and I never had access to official records to verify the dates he gave. He

once told me that he had deliberately lied about his date of birth in an attempt to avoid the draft. But the Germans had conscripted him anyway and sent him to work as a forced labourer on a farm in Bavaria. The five years he spent there until the war ended were among the best of his life. He ate well, and recalled German organization of economic life as being much more efficient than the Russian way of doing things. The latter had been imposed on socialist Poland after the war, and the population was still suffering from the ensuing dislocation. Wasyl and Mariya had attended school for only three years. Yet they remembered the village of their childhood positively. Even if only the children of the priests and the Jewish innkeepers had access to education outside the village, people had lived better in those times than they did under socialism. Wasyl's family had owned 30 hectares, about half of which was forest. Under socialism, after returning to the village they had been allocated 5 hectares of arable land at an unfavourable elevation. They owned no forest, though they could take what they needed to heat their wooden house. In 1981, Wasyl and Mariya had four cows, which was above average in the village. They sold milk and meat to the state, but accumulation was not on their agenda: since they had no children, they saw no point in acquiring a tractor or building a modern house. Critical of the support provided by the local state, they cooperated informally with both Polish and east Slav neighbours. Wasyl was respected for a range of practical and artistic skills that ranged from village smithy to playing the violin on festive occasions. Mariya was known as modest, industrious and a devout Greek Catholic who preferred to take the bus to neighbouring Komańcza where she could attend a Greek Catholic service than participate in a Roman Catholic mass in the Wisłok church she had frequented throughout her childhood. In answer to my questions about identity she would say that her people were *Greccy*, a shorthand for the Greek Catholics.

The church and cemetery at the lower end of the valley where Mariya's sister was buried were transferred to the Roman Catholic parish of Komańcza to serve the Polish colonists who began to arrive in the early 1950s. The church that had served the upper end of the valley, near the house of Wasyl and Mariya, was burned down in the mid-1950s (allegedly by employees of the new state farm). Following *Akcja Wisła*, Wasyl was imprisoned for almost two years, before being released to join his wife on a farm near Słupsk formerly owned by Germans. They yearned to return to their native village but 18 years passed before they succeeded. Wasyl poured scorn on the Polish colonists, in part because so many of them abused alcohol. Known for his eccentricities, he once erected a large cross on his fields to commemorate soldiers of the First World War whose bones he claimed to have uncovered when ploughing with his horse. He denied any part in UPA activities and helped me eventually to understand the foolishness of my repeated questions concerning the "people" to which he belonged. In his reminiscences, Warsaw, Kyiv and Moscow were less prominent than Germany. With a friend (in whose house I was living at the time), he would pore over the weekly newspaper of the Ukrainian Socio-Cultural Society, particularly the last page, which was written in a Lemko dialect close to their own, rather than literary Ukrainian. But for Wasyl, neither Lemko nor Ukrainian had the totalizing emotional force of a modern national identity.

Wasyl's cross, 1981

Wasyl and Mariya haymaking, 1981

Wasyl and his neighbour Jan, 1981

By contrast, a neighbour of Wasyl was forthright in embracing Ukrainian identity. It was rumoured that Jan had taken part in UPA activities as a young man (he would never discuss those years with me). Later he had emigrated to Canada, where he had stayed for several decades. His daughter had married the son of a Polish colonist, who moved in with

them. Henceforth, both languages were used in the household. Jan carried his Ukrainian identity with him after his death by leaving instructions that he be laid to rest in the copse which had formerly served as the cemetery of the upper village (this was the first burial in this cemetery since the destruction of the wooden church half a century earlier).

Emigration to the USA and Canada was continuing at the time of my fieldwork. One young man had worked temporarily in Vienna. Others employed at the state farm or the sawmill at nearby Rzepedź spoke only Polish during their working hours. Ukrainian television was not available, nor was the language taught at the village school. At least one individual in the upper village was thought to conceal his Ukrainian descent lines. No one could relate to the pre-war designation reported by Reinfuss, according to which a cluster of villages in this district had held on to an identity that derived from being the property of the crown in the feudal era (*Królewszczyzna*). In my monograph, drawing attention to general assimilationist trends as documented by Polish sociologists, I predicted that the population of socialist Wisłok Wielki was likely sooner or later to forget its east Slav heritage in similar fashion (Hann 1985, 144–9).

Would Wasyl (Bazyli) have had a sharper notion of belonging to a people if Ukraine had possessed a more conventional history as a nation-state? He and his neighbours were certainly familiar with nationalist slogans such as *Lachy za Sanem* (proclaiming that ethnic Poles should withdraw to the west of the San river, since the lands to the east belonged to Ukrainians). But Wisłok Wielki is located well to the west of the San, and the Lemko zone extends much further still. Should Stalin have decreed that this entire zone (including parts to the south of the mountains that became part of Czechoslovakia after 1918) be incorporated into the boundaries of Ukraine, when he redefined them in 1945? This would have meant stretching the Soviet Union almost to the precincts of Cracow. Such cartography could have been justified by facts on the ground – just as a case might have been made for allocating parts or even the whole of Donbas to Russia. In the world after 1918, the nation-state was the dominant game in town and the principal of adjusting borders to bring them into line with ethnic-ethnographic features on the ground commanded general agreement.

But it is also possible to argue that Lemko-Ukrainians, together with their close kin in Slovakia, the Transcarpathian Ukraine, and smaller communities in Hungary and Romania, should *not* be lumped together with Ukrainians. This is the position of Paul Robert Magocsi, Chair in Ukrainian Studies at the University of Toronto (see e.g. Magocsi 2015). Magocsi has frequently attracted the ire of nationalists in Ukraine, for whom Lemkos and Carpathian Rusyns can only be classified as sub-groups of an indivisible Ukrainian people. This replicates controversies at a higher level concerning the differentiation between Ukrainians and Russians. The authorities in Kyiv have not been willing to recognize the Rusyns of Transcarpathia as a minority. Unlike the Hungarian minority, they lack a strong sense of national identity.[1] This problem has been resolved in post-socialist Poland by recognizing Ukrainians as a *national* minority while still allowing citizens to declare Lemko as their ethnicity (*etniczność*).[2]

While their neighbour Jan would have declared himself without hesitation to be Ukrainian, I am not sure which identity Wasyl and Mariya would have embraced, had they lived long enough to answer census questions in a free post-socialist era. They would probably have welcomed an option that has never been available: to declare themselves to be Rus' (*Rusnak* was after all the designation noted by Reinfuss in the inter-war

decades). This is not the Rusyn identity as advocated by Magocsi, which is confined to a relatively small region of the Carpathians. Nor does it imply political sympathy with a Russian state (which Wasyl certainly did not have). It refers rather to an east Slav linguistic family and, above all, to east Slav religious heritage, subsuming both Orthodox and Greek Catholics.

After many years' absence, following the collapse of socialism I returned to the Southeast Poland in the 1990s. My new project was focused on the border city of Przemyśl (Ukrainian: Peremyshl), located north of the mountains on the San river, less than an hour's drive from L'viv. Przemyśl was the historic centre of both Roman Catholic and Greek Catholic dioceses. When the latter were repressed by socialist power holders, they reached a modus vivendi with the dominant national church that afforded the minority a measure of protection. I was interested in how post-1990 freedoms were impacting on denominational and inter-ethnic relations. One sacred building in Przemyśl was especially contentious. Ukrainian Greek Catholics, a sizable minority in the city, looked forward eagerly to restitution of their cathedral, located on a prominent central hilltop, which had been appropriated in 1946. Pope John-Paul II himself urged that the building be returned from Roman Catholic stewardship to its historic owners. However, conservative clerical forces combined with secular nationalists to defend "the Polish character of the city." It was argued that the building had in fact originally belonged to western Christians, and that it was therefore only right that it should remain in the hands of the Roman Catholic Carmelites. After numerous protests and violent incidents, this came to pass. The Greek Catholics had to content themselves with an alternative edifice, clearly inferior in symbolic value. The dome of their former cathedral was dismantled and replaced by an elegant spire that was supposed to emphasize the western character of the city skyline (Hann 1998a).

In these years, then, relations between majority and minority in Przemyśl were highly antagonistic. Negative stereotypes of Ukrainians were widespread in virtually all sections of Polish society. Activists (including well-organized "veterans" of 1940s violence and refugees from Wolhynia and *Eastern Galicia*) protested against the extension of socio-cultural rights to the minority and condemned the presence of petty traders who flocked in from many parts of the former USSR during these years, driven by poverty in their native communities. Historical memories of the violence of the 1940s (actively promoted in anti-Ukrainian popular literature even in the socialist decades) were now supplemented by negative attitudes towards Greek Catholic aspirations and towards "dirty traders" at the marketplace (Hann 1998b). These images and discourses were the prolongation of a long history of unequal relations. Postwar Poland was hardly an imperial power, but there was still plenty of contempt and disdain towards those who had usurped Polish territory in the eastern territories known in popular discourse as the *Kresy*. Moscow was hated more, but Russia was an imperial equivalent, representing an historical people. In contrast, the Ukrainians who had perpetrated comparable horrors against Poles during and after the Second World War were not an ancient enemy for whom one might deep down admit some grudging respect; they were simply terrorists.

In the light of these personal research experiences in the last century, first in Wisłok Wielki and later in Przemyśl, I would not have predicted the strongly pro-Ukrainian sentiment of the media and virtually all political parties in Poland since President Vladimir Putin's forces invaded Ukraine in February 2022. Successive post-socialist

governments in Warsaw have sought ever closer cooperation with Kyiv and promoted the Ukrainian cause in Brussels and in other contexts. The response to the Russian invasion of February 2022 showed extraordinary generosity throughout Polish society.[3] It was as if the horrors of Wolhynia in 1943 could be forgotten in light of Ukraine's suffering in the present. This forgetting has puzzled me. Given the prevalence of the anti-Ukrainian sentiment that I recalled from the last century, both in the socialist decades and after 1990 when it could be more freely expressed in the public sphere, it seemed to me that Wolhynia and UPA terrorism had been firmly etched into the Polish national memory, on a par with the atrocities perpetrated by Germans and Russians. Even though little progress has been made in high-level political dialogue to resolve the sensitive issues still being researched by scholars at the Institute for National Remembrance, the transformation in Polish-Ukrainian relations illustrates how quickly deep-seated stereotypes can be overcome. Animosities doubtless persist, especially in families which experienced violence directly and had to abandon their homes in the *Kresy*. But the larger picture is one of sympathy and solidarity vis-à-vis the common enemy in Moscow.

Modifying the old grammar of alterity was nevertheless a gradual process. In Przemyśl, inter-ethnic relations began to improve in the first decade of the new century, not least because entrepreneurs (irrespective of ethnicity) realized that the ethnic and religious diversity of this beautiful region could attract tourists and contribute to economic prosperity (Buzalka 2007). In the country as a whole, perceptions of Ukrainians improved as large numbers crossed the border to work in Poland (especially women providing domestic help and care). When Poland joined the EU and millions migrated to the west (especially to the UK), some of the gaps left in local labour markets and in families were filled by eastern neighbours (Follis 2012). The new pattern of interaction is hierarchical, ranging from benign paternalism to shameful exploitation. But the overall effect has been to familiarize Poles with Ukrainians and to diminish the force of the old negative stereotypes. The war of 2022 left no room for debate: Ukraine was the victim of an unprovoked invasion. The rapprochement between Warsaw and Kyiv has unfolded on the basis of two peoples, each endowed with a sovereign state, who need to work together against a common enemy driven by neo-colonial goals. The fact that one of these peoples possessed its own state throughout the Middle Ages while the other lacked such a long history of sovereignty seemed to have no relevance.

Historicizing a non-historical people

I have introduced individual persons and belaboured the anthropological commonplace that identities are not primordially given but constructed in history because I find that so much of the international coverage of the Ukrainian case naturalizes a Ukrainian people/nation, pluckily defending itself against its long-term Russian other in the manner of David against Goliath. The conflict is commonly presented in simplistic terms: a Ukrainian people that wishes to live in freedom versus the tyranny of Russia. I think anthropologists should work closely with historians to critique such stereotypes. Identities in Southeast Poland have been shaped by a welter of factors, from the sermons of Greek Catholic priests to assimilation policies in the Second Polish Republic and, after its demise, the forcible removal of the east Slav population in the course of an anti-terrorist campaign. Similar complexities are found throughout Ukraine itself. I suggest that collective

identities be viewed as *plastic*: the people is never given primordially. The metaphors of "fluidity" and "construction" are no less appropriate; but I prefer to speak of plasticity when highlighting the contingencies which have influenced the efforts of diverse agents to fashion the identity of populations of varying shape and size in every historical period.

Given such plasticity (which is also linguistic plasticity, especially before language codification and mass literacy), it makes good sense for historians to focus on territory rather than collective identities (Magocsi 2010). At the same time, it is also possible to trace the changing contours of human groups, and the ways in which some of them emerge as dominant peoples within a given space. I start with the distinction between historical and non-historical peoples, because it might reasonably be supposed that a people such as the Ukrainians, who have only been known as such since the nineteenth century, is more exposed to geopolitical vagaries than those with a longer continuous pedigree of statehood and *Hochkultur*.

The concept of the people that lacks a history (*geschichtslos*) became popular through the philosophical works of Hegel. It was later adapted by Marxist theorists, notably Otto Bauer, and has been widely applied in scholarship on Eastern Europe, including Ukraine.[4] Whereas Hungary, Poland and Russia can trace the history of their states back to feudal hierarchies more than a millennium ago, a country such as Slovakia lacks such a past. Ukraine is a more complex case because it can lay (at least) equal claim to the heritage of Rus', the capital of which was in Kyiv. But statehood was lost and no social strata (or classes) were able to consolidate a unique high culture based on the standardization of a Ukrainian language prior to the nineteenth century. The binary opposition is not always clear. The Czechs met at least some of the conventional criteria for a historical people in the Middle Ages, but by the time Hegel wrote they formed part of an amorphous mass of "Austrian Slavs" within the Habsburg Empire. Poland seemed likely to go the same way at the end of the eighteenth century, when it was partitioned between three of its neighbours. But the long history of Polish statehood and the vigorous resistance of educated strata in the early nineteenth century led Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels to laud the Poles as an historical nation; moreover, one that was destined to further the cause of international revolution against reactionary powers in Vienna and elsewhere.

The authors of the *Communist Manifesto* took a correspondingly negative view of the Poles' east Slav neighbours, in those days generally known as Ruthenians (Rosdolsky 1987). Overwhelmingly peasants, tied in relations of serfdom to landlords whose ethnicity differed from their own, such a people without history was easy prey for a manipulative Habsburg Emperor. This at any rate was the supposition of the Rhineland socialists when Polish elites were attacked and massacred by their serfs in 1846: it must have been the *Ruthenen*! This error can be excused only by the extraordinary ignorance that prevailed in western Europe concerning social conditions and interethnic relations to the east, including the eastern realms of the Habsburg Empire. In fact, Polish Galician landlords were murdered by their Polish serfs: this was a violent conflict between social classes, not peoples.

In the 1840s, few Polish peasants would have had any clear consciousness of national identity. However, in the absence of a Polish state, literati were beginning to consolidate a national memory that was eventually embraced in its essentials by the mass of the rural population, following improvements in education and literacy rates, in combination with the impact of peasant political movements. Even in a historical nation such as Poland, the

emergence and dissemination of collective identity took a long time; progress was uneven, due in part to political partition but also to variation in economic development and literacy within each sector.

Defining the boundaries and codifying an equivalent national memory for a non-historical people were far more challenging tasks. This was not a case of colonial expansion analogous to, say, the Qing (Manchu) occupation of Eastern Turkestan. Ukrainians could hardly be distinguished from Russians on ethnographic criteria in the way that the inhabitants of Western Turkestan, or Latvia, or Georgia could be distinguished as different kinds of people.[5] Prior to the dismemberment of the Polish kingdom and its incorporation into the Habsburg Empire, the region later known as Eastern Galicia formed part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Most inhabitants were peasants who communicated in east Slav dialects. In the generations of Habsburg rule, it suited power holders in Vienna to enable and even to promote Ukrainian national consciousness as a strategy to counter Polish aspirations. Intellectuals enjoyed greater freedom to construct the Ukrainian nation in Galicia than they did in the territories incorporated into the Russian Empire. Hence, although the roots of Ukrainian national consciousness, its historiography and the very name of the people were originally formulated by intellectuals within Russia, Galicia has a stronger claim to be viewed as the Piedmont of Ukrainian nationalism (Magocsi 2002).

After 1918, the Galician lands that nowadays constitute western Ukraine were seized by the new Polish state (in contravention of international law) and ruled in authoritarian fashion. After a few years of independence that featured high levels of violence (notably against Jews), in 1923 the rest of the country we now know as Ukraine became a union republic of the USSR. This accession was hardly voluntary. For almost 70 years (50 years in the case of the territories taken from Poland and incorporated into the USSR in 1944), Ukrainian identity was nurtured within (and constrained by) Soviet institutions. Ethnic Ukrainians were prominent at the apex of the political hierarchy in Moscow and occupied positions of privilege throughout the country. The contingent nature of Ukraine's spatial boundaries was exemplified by Khruschchev's decision to reassign Crimea to (formerly an autonomous republic) from Russia to Ukraine in 1954.

Although the Ukrainian language and Ukrainian culture were cultivated in these decades, not all Ukrainians were satisfied. In the years of *perestroika*, the cultural movement known as RUKH expanded its political ambitions outside its core support in the west of the country. One goal was to extend Ukrainian language teaching to areas with Russian-speaking majorities, notably Donbas. The last Soviet census of 1989 reported over 11 million ethnic Russians living in Ukraine (approximately one quarter of the total population). In the first referendum of 1991 (by which time Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia had all proclaimed their sovereignty), a large majority of voters in Ukraine opted *not* to go down this path. They preferred to hold on to some form of union with Russia (and other union republics). Only after the disintegration of the centre later that same year and more declarations of independence in other union republics did Ukraine follow suit and (following another referendum) proclaim its sovereignty.

Ties to Russia soon became the bone of fierce political contention. In consultative referenda, the inhabitants of Donbas expressed their preference for some form of federalism and a decentralization that would allow them to continue using Russian as their first language. Such concessions would have implied a different conception of Ukrainian peoplehood and they were never forthcoming. The culmination of political tensions

was the *Maidan* uprising of 2014, which toppled President Viktor Yanukovych. This led in turn to a dramatic shift in allegiance towards the West, with Ukraine becoming an intimate partner of both the EU and NATO. Volodymyr Zelensky was elected to the presidency in 2019 as a popular peace candidate, promising to eradicate oligarchical corruption and to reconcile competing interest groups. But Zelensky soon adopted the pro-Western platforms of the nationalists and began even closer cooperation with NATO and American advisers. While expenditure on social services and education was cut, the arms budget was ratcheted sharply upwards.[6]

This potted history should suffice to cast doubt on simplistic representations of Ukrainian peoplehood. Significant differences in attitudes and political preferences between Galicia (above all L'viv and its hinterland) and Donbas were documented in the 1990s by historian Yaroslav Hrytsak (2005). Whereas Ukrainian sentiment in Galicia emulated Polish nationalism and was based on the rigorous exclusion of all *others*, elsewhere more flexible notions of Ukrainian peoplehood prevailed, which did not preclude close ties with Russia. When, following the *Maidan* uprising, separatists in Luhansk and Donets'k (with Russian support) split away from the new power holders in Kyiv, the differing notions of peoplehood were clearly exposed. The levels of commitment to something called (only quite recently) Ukraine, the content of that identity, and its geographical boundaries, have all been plastic (cf. Halemba 2015 on "anational" orientations in Transcarpathia; nearer to the zones of devastation, it suffices to mention the resilience of various forms of Cossack identity). It seems certain that the Russian invasion of February 2022 has weakened regional variation and engendered intense patriotic sentiment across the country, astutely choreographed by Zelensky and his advisers.[7]

Of course, historical peoples are also subject to contingencies. Their identities may be harder to eliminate, but the states that carry them can undergo sweeping changes. The Polish state disappeared at the end of the eighteenth century. In the middle of the twentieth century it was shifted, as it were, from east to west, while the Hungarian state shrank dramatically a generation earlier. These geographical changes, associated with large-scale population movements, had far-reaching consequences for ethnic homogeneity and the experience of what I am terming peoplehood. The People's Republic of Poland no longer incorporated a large east Slav population, because the new political boundary left the great majority in Ukraine and Belarus. But, as noted in the previous section, not even Stalinist ethnic cleansing could make for a perfect congruence. East and west Slavs continued to intermingle in Przemyśl, and in some places it was possible to find two confessions and two languages present in one and the same village (e.g. Komańcza, next door to Wisłok Wielki).

What light can socio-cultural anthropologists shed on this historical complexity? Can we connect the macro history I have explored in this section to the micro stories with which I began? One obvious candidate to represent the discipline in this context is Ernest Gellner, who was both a philosopher and a social anthropologist, and whose theory of nationalism has had wide interdisciplinary influence (Gellner 1983; Skalník 2022). Inspired by his knowledge of both the Muslim Ottomans and the *Vielvölkerstaat* of the Habsburgs (the latter being a significant element in the history of his own family), Gellner argued that the nature of human groups and loyalties changes with the advent of industrial society. Whereas *Agraria* was consistent with a plurality of cultures (languages) within the polity,

the functional needs of *Industria* require all members of the society to be competent (literate) in the same *Hochkultur*. Industrial divisions of labour are predicated on unprecedented mobility, which is incompatible with the hierarchies of the old empires.

Gellner's model is abstract and does not distinguish *a priori* between historical and non-historical peoples.[8] Peasants north of the Carpathians who spoke dialects of Polish and peasants to the south who spoke dialects of Slovak were all peasants, subject to the same Emperor. Processes of nation-building on the ground played out differently (the Slovak nation-state was not finalized until after the socialist era). Nor does the Gellnerian model recognize different styles of imperialism. While the Austrians pursued a policy of divide and rule, the Hungarians (junior partner in the Empire from 1867) aggressively assimilated non-Magyar populations within their territory. Both Vienna and Budapest ruled over large numbers of Ruthenians, i.e. the people known nowadays as Ukrainians. But the most obvious problem with Gellner's model throughout this region is the causality attributed to industrialization processes: the eastern European peoples mobilized by romantic "awakeners" to pursue the cause of their nation against Habsburg and Ottoman domination in the course of the nineteenth century were almost all economically backward (the Czechs being the major exception).

The case of Russia is different again. It was not addressed by Gellner (he knew the language and had a lifelong interest in the Soviet Union, but scholarship concerning its Romanov predecessor was beyond his ken). Presumably he would have viewed the multiplicity of languages within the Czarist Empire as exemplifying the pluralism of *Agraria*. Here too, the rise of national sentiment does not correspond in any straightforward way to industrial transformation. In the Ukrainian lands, nationalism was weak in the region where the new industries were strongest, notably the districts that came to be known as Donbas. It flourished, however, in the western, Galician districts that remained backward economically but allowed intellectuals more freedom to propagate the nationalist cause. In short, the Gellnerian model is inadequate for grasping the political contingencies that shaped quite different interpretations of Ukrainian peoplehood in L'viv and Donets'k.

Because of the migrations and demographic trends it triggered, industrialization may nonetheless be of enormous historical significance for the plasticity of nations. In the middle of the nineteenth century, Donbas was still sparsely populated and ethnically diverse. The ores and minerals of the region along the Donets river led to the rapid establishment of new settlements. Mines and steel mills attracted settlers from many parts of the empire. While dialects were later consolidated and literary Ukrainian eventually came to predominate in rural areas, Russian remained the lingua franca of the towns. One key player in Donbas industrialization was a foreigner, John Hughes, born and raised in the valleys of South Wales, where he had pioneered a range of metallurgical technologies. Donets'k was named after him for many years (Yuzovka). It is instructive to compare the impact of the new economic order on these two non-historical nations. The Welsh never succeeded in establishing a unified state (though they did have gentry hierarchies and limited literacy). Despite heroic resistance that is conserved in the collective memory, they were definitively conquered by the English by the beginning of the fifteenth century. Yet more than three centuries later the Welsh language, differing radically from English, was still widely spoken in most parts of the country. Its demise thereafter was accelerated by the large-scale immigration that brought hundreds of

thousands of Irish and English to join Welsh-speaking natives in the new industrial and mining communities. English quickly became the dominant medium of communication, both in the valleys and in the cities that mushroomed to export Welsh coal, including the new capital, Cardiff.

In the Gellnerian vision, these transformations are readily intelligible. The modern state, predicated upon efficient communication and mobility, homogenizes its citizens; it must eliminate obvious barriers, including linguistic difference. But the Welsh language (which disappeared in my own family when my maternal grandfather married the daughter of Irish immigrants in Cardiff) has staged a comeback. Even in the valleys of South Wales, where the ravages of deindustrialization have a social impact that is hardly less dramatic than the original dislocations, Welsh is now taught in schools. Its use in the public sphere continues to expand. Welsh identity, including pride in a range of cultural and sporting domains, is strong even among those lacking the language. At the time of writing, this does not translate into majority support for independence (despite the growing strength of the language, political nationalism is weaker in Wales than it is in Scotland). But it is worth speculating what might happen in the not too distant future. Would the government of an independent *Cymru* insist on a unitary state with Welsh as its sole official language, even in those valleys where English has been the dominant medium of communication for the last two centuries? Would it legislate that only Welsh be permitted in parliament, and that no work be disseminated in English before a Welsh translation is available for simultaneous publication? I put forward this analogy in order to suggest that some of the nation-building policies of the present government in Kyiv, put in place since the *Maidan* and intensified as a result of the Russian invasion, are incompatible with the norms which have evolved elsewhere in Europe, where numerous states recognize more than one language and minority languages once thought to be dying out have been revived with generous government assistance.[9]

Bronisław Malinowski: a synchronist suspicious of sovereignty[10]

In the preceding section, I showed that Ernest Gellner's materialist theory of nationalism, based on an abstract contrast between the archetypal forms of the division of labour in agrarian and industrial societies, is inadequate as a guide to the spread of national sentiment in the real world of East-Central Europe. The theory has little or no predictive power: the contingencies of economics and politics combine with the inherent plasticity of human populations to yield outcomes that can only be explained by means of detailed historical analysis.

But to embrace history, with all its fluid complexity, has been problematic for loyal adherents to the modern British school of social anthropology. The undisputed founder of this school at the London School of Economics in the 1920s was Bronisław Kacper Malinowski. Its hallmark was ethnography: intensive fieldwork in a localized community using the local language was the key to achieving a satisfactory understanding of the native's world-view. At least in the case of non-literate societies, it followed that the ethnographic monographs produced by the anthropologists of this school were inherently synchronic. Of course, the Trobriand Islanders could tell you myths about their society in past time. Their land use in the present was determined by their ideas about where exactly a matrilineal ancestor had emerged from the ground in the distant past.

The use of the past to legitimate interests and social structures in the present is not restricted to societies lacking historical records. It is a characteristic of both historical and non-historical nations in Europe. For the anthropologist committed to synchrony, there is no essential difference between the two. The past always leaves traces in the present: in memory, in the built environment, and sometimes in libraries and archives. But the Malinowskian anthropologist is interested in contemporary functionality, not in the pursuit of an "objective" account of "what really happened in history."

Malinowski did not carry out research in Europe but he did touch on the problems of European peoplehood and nationalism in some late writings. He distinguished between "cultural groups," such as tribes and nations, and their political consolidation in the form of a state. The trend of modern history was towards the formation of states. But states had a habit of veering towards aggressive nationalism. They were a good thing if they restricted their activities to the protection of the culture, but the state should not act as a "mobilizer" of nations. It followed for Malinowski that "Political sovereignty must never be associated with nationhood" (1944: 274). Instead, there should be "full national sovereignty for each cultural group" (*Ibid*). To avoid the catastrophe of another world war, it was vital to embed all political units in larger, encompassing structures. This "superstate" would have to be federal and require the "abrogation of sovereignty" in its political form (1944: 333–4).[11]

This anthropological theory of international relations (perhaps utopian, as Malinowski himself admitted) was outlined in lectures given at Yale shortly before his death in 1942. However, it was more than a wartime polemic against Fascism and totalitarianism. The basic precepts had been concretely articulated with reference to East-Central Europe much earlier. In the Preface which Malinowski contributed in 1935 to a collective volume about "Cassubian civilisation," he paid homage to the empire in which he was raised. Polish cultural identity flourished in late Habsburg Cracow, despite the fact that political and economic power were concentrated elsewhere. The imperial structures of Austria (but not those of Berlin, Saint Petersburg or Budapest) were evidently congenial to the scholar who founded a new school of social anthropology at the London School of Economics in the last years of the British Empire. Unfortunately, as he noted, the benevolence of enlightened rulers in Vienna was abused, e.g. in Galicia, where "the Polish majority bullied the Ruthenians" (Malinowski 1935: viii).

By the time Malinowski wrote this Preface, the Second Polish Republic had developed its own variant of aggressive nationalism. He must have been aware of the fact that roughly one third of the population of the state was not ethnically Polish. If only from the British press and from Polish visitors to London, he would have known of the "pacification" campaigns, assimilation pressure via the school policy, and colonization by ethnic Poles of lands in territories illegally annexed following the First World War. Following the Second World War, most of the land in question was incorporated into Ukraine. Neither Ukraine as a union republic nor Poland as a vassal state of the Soviet Union enjoyed sovereignty as conventionally understood. But for Malinowski, who would certainly have condemned the repressive features of the Soviet Union to the very end of its existence, political sovereignty was to be approached critically; it was not to be confused with freedom.[12] In Gellnerian terms, Malinowski's political philosophy was that of *Agraria* rather than *Industria*. His affection for the empire of Franz Joseph probably melded with

admiration for Poland under the Jagiellonian dynasty and later the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. On a charitable interpretation, these forms of polity had all respected and even nurtured the integrity of the cultural groups they contained.

None of this helps us to resolve the fundamental problem of peoplehood. What are we to say about cultural groups that do not (yet) have any awareness that they *are* indeed a group or a people? While minority communities such as those formed by Jews, Armenians and Germans in Eastern Europe were clearly differentiated from others by language and religion, how could the peasant masses emulate this? In some areas, as noted above, even the linguistic boundary between west and east Slavs was fuzzy. In these conditions, to recruit the speakers of the western dialects to a Polish national consciousness was far from straightforward. The challenge was essentially the same as that faced in France (Weber 1976); but it was rendered harder in nineteenth century Poland by the absence of central state institutions. The task facing the mobilizers of east Slavs in places like Wisłok Wielki was harder still, since these members of a non-historical nation had very little on which to build a political identity. The ultimate foundation of peoplehood was everywhere grounded in ethnographic difference.[13] But what was to be done if villagers in a backward *Agraria* did not appreciate their national destiny?

In Europe, Malinowski implies, the problem of nationalism required more serious attention to history than permitted by his functionalist presentism. In a scintillating late essay (inspired by the research of Andrzej Paluch and his associates into the roots of Malinowski's empiricist functionalism in Cracow and Vienna before the First World War), Ernest Gellner interpreted Malinowski's embrace of synchronism to the fact that History (in the Hegelian sense) had not been kind to the Polish nation (Gellner 1988). The combination of cultural nationalism and political internationalism resulted in a profound antipathy to everything that had taken place in the past. This is all very well for an intellectual who feels secure in his Polish cultural identity, but the case of a nation that had never had a state it could call its own to begin with is obviously different. As I noted above, Ukrainian awakeners rose to the challenge, initially in the Russian Empire and later in Habsburg Galicia. Enough was achieved to ensure that, in the violent aftermath of the First World War, thanks to Lenin's pragmatism on the national question, Ukraine came into existence as a permanent component of the USSR, the structural equivalent of the Russian Federation. Seven decades of the USSR then ensured that Ukraine was on the map for good; it was a Hegelian nation in a cultural sense, even if full political sovereignty was never on the agenda.

The problem with Malinowski's argumentation (ultimately a philosophical problem, as expounded by Gellner) is that his synchronism implies taking the "cultural unit" as a given, an isolate. Later critics would speak of primordialism (there are traces of this in his endorsement of the Cassubian symposium and elsewhere in his later works). But to reproach Malinowski with this term seems misplaced. Rather, his synchronism blocks any serious consideration of past forms of peoplehood. This is unhelpful, even in the case of islands such as the Trobriands. Had Malinowski worked in eastern Galicia rather than eastern New Guinea, he might have hesitated before promoting synchronic analysis as the defining characteristic of the discipline. He might instead have felt compelled to work out a more convincing diachronic theory of culture. More attention to history will reveal the contingency of all human groups. The distinction between historical and non-historical nations in Europe is useful in making empirical sense of complex processes of

identity formation. It does *not* mean that the more historical group enjoys a higher moral value. In this respect, Malinowski's position is clear and consistent with his synchronicity. In the new world federalism that he called for, all states enjoy the same rights.[14]

Conclusions

In this paper I have drawn sequentially on ethnography, history and the political theories of Bronisław Malinowski to argue that there are no grounds for the anthropologist *qua* anthropologist to line up alongside lawyers and others behind the principle of political sovereignty, in the case of Ukraine or generally. My observations among small numbers of east Slavs in Southeast Poland in the socialist era confirm anthropological truisms. Both personal and collective identities are plastic. They are not arbitrary but they are formed and contested in specific political circumstances. The nature of peoplehood can change quite quickly. Poles have come to perceive Ukrainians quite differently in the decades since I first visited their borderlands. I have been impressed by the post-imperialist stance taken by the political classes in Warsaw to a country that many Poles had historically treated as a colony. At the same time, I am saddened to see Poland playing the role of cheerleader for a new imperialist stranglehold led by the USA.

Ethnographic case studies can feed into comparative historical analysis to challenge the distortions of nationalist historiography. In the second section of the paper I outlined some salient features of the "non-historical" Ukrainian case. The seeds of nationalism in the imperial states of Russia and Austria-Hungary bore fruit when those states collapsed. The institutionalization of a Ukrainian republic within the USSR during seven decades was a road of no return. But socio-cultural proximity to Russia remained, above all in the region where industrialization had changed the profile of the population. To grasp this complex situation, I ventured an analogy with my native Wales. I drew attention to the outcome of the first referendum of 1991: despite years of RUKH agitation, a large majority of the inhabitants of Ukraine freely declared their wish to remain in some form of union with Russia. This fact should be taken seriously, not dismissed as a consequence of Sovietization and Russification having perverted the natural destiny of the Ukrainian people.

My opening epigraph was taken from a late and largely forgotten work of Malinowski. In the last years of his life, exiled in the United States during the Second World War, he drew on his encyclopaedic knowledge of human culture to deliver a passionate critique of the modern state and totalitarianism. In a post-war settlement, he argued, freedom and a peaceful future for humanity would depend on transcending the sovereign nation-state. Malinowski was careful to distinguish peoplehood (he used the word nationhood), which was the right of all "cultural groups," from aggressive nationalism which impacted on the rights of neighbouring groups as well as on internal minorities. He therefore called for federal solutions. Malinowski did not expand on the plasticity of cultural groups because his commitment to synchronism precluded such a step. Would he have recognized Ukrainians as such a group? Probably yes, though grudgingly because of his distaste for nationalist mobilizers. He would certainly have deplored Vladimir Putin's distorted representations of east Slav history and the crude violence of his regime. But he would also have deplored the aggressive nationalism of power holders in Kyiv who have denied elementary freedoms to cultural minorities within Ukraine: not only Russians but

Hungarians, Rusyns, and others. And it is reasonable to suppose he would have attributed a great deal of the responsibility for the catastrophe and its prolongation to the machinations of the EU and NATO, and above all of the USA. On all of these points, I feel confident that Wasyl Szariak in Wisłok Wielki would have agreed with him.

Publicly engaged anthropologists should not be subscribing to the tragic renewal of Cold War polarities. We should attempt instead to write history without taking peoples and nation-states as our prime frame of reference. Humans have always lived in groups, but the nature of those groups has been incredibly diverse. In East-Central Europe, historical nations generally had better cards than those without history. Some of them, including Poland and Russia, grafted virulent nationalism on to the imperialism they practiced in the era of *Agraria*. But adoption of the same aggressive nationalism by a former subaltern is not a solution that Malinowski would have countenanced. Hence, although many in the West see the present conflict in terms of a legitimate fight for liberation from Moscow's neo-imperialism, I have argued that anthropologists should not join the chorus of lawyers and political scientists who sacralize archaic doctrines of national sovereignty. The synchronism of Bronisław Malinowski needs to be complemented by history; but his approach to international relations is deeply humanist and deserves to be taken seriously.

Notes

1. Agnieszka Halemba (2015) has characterized the people she worked with in the Transcarpathian region in the 2010s as "anational."
2. The distinction between national and ethnic minority turns on the existence of a state to fortify the subjective identification in the case of the former.
3. This generosity was all the more striking in view of the well-documented less charitable attitudes shown by Poles and their government towards other immigrants (especially Muslims) seeking refuge in their country (or, in most cases, simply wishing to cross it on their way elsewhere). The extent to which pro-Ukrainian sentiment had taken root in Polish society (as distinct from its political elites) was called into question by complaints of ingratitude in the course of the 2023 parliamentary electoral campaigning.
4. See Rudnytsky (1981); von Hagen (1995) (and ensuing discussion). It has become common, e.g. among those who favour postcolonial approaches, to reject the dichotomy because it is thought to privilege the powerful and to denigrate the subaltern. I argue that it remains useful in explaining outcomes; respect for a "young" or "new" national identity in the present should not entail a distorting of the contingent emergence of peoplehood in the past.
5. To make this obvious point is not to indulge in Putin apologetics. The right of non-historical nations who are closely related to an imperial power to assert their peoplehood and develop forms of collective memory accordingly is not to be questioned. The problems begin with the assertion of exclusive notions of sovereignty, discussed further below. The question of agency raises further issues. The Poles as a people were attributed strong historical agency by the Rhineland socialists. For Engels and Marx, the agency of Ruthenians subject to Austrian rule was negative from the point of view of historical progress. But from an anthropological perspective, the agency of the people(s) without history is never in doubt; indeed, it is the hallmark of our discipline's contribution (Wolf 1982). In an era when few peasants anywhere were conscious of belonging to a nation, practical constraints on the agency of the masses were scarcely impacted by the dichotomy discussed in this section.
6. Between 2012 and 2021 arms expenditure increased by 142%. See Streeck (2023, 132–3), citing data of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

7. In the words of Gregory Afinogenov (2023), "Putin's failed attempt to impose a pro-Russian choice on Ukrainians has instead produced the opposite effect. There is no longer any organized opposition to a cultural agenda that promotes the removal of the Russian language from government and education, the repudiation of the Soviet Union, and the celebration of right-wing national heroes like Stepan Bandera and the Nazi captain and pogromist Roman Shukhevych. Ukrainian society has consolidated around a vision of its identity created in the unrussified west of the country, though its exact contours are still being determined."
8. For a compatible theorization by a Polish historian and contemporary of Gellner who finds the distinction useful, see Chlebowczyk (1980). Chlebowczyk emphasizes the impact of capitalist relations of production rather than industrialization *per se*. He contrasts the western European model in which national identity was forged by strong states with an "East-Central European model." Poland was distinctive because, though lacking a state in the era of the partitions, it nonetheless qualified by virtue of its history as a "fully shaped political nation with a complete social structure" (1980: 19). In contrast, "plebeian" communities such as the Slovaks and the Ruthenians "were only just coming within the orbit of nation-forming processes" (*Ibid*.). Chlebowczyk stresses that "The term 'non-historical' – let me repeat this after O. Bauer – does not mean that these communities had no history of their own or that they lacked cultural achievements" (1980: 20).
9. As a native of Cardiff who does not speak Welsh, I am personally sympathetic to the cause of independence. But there would need to be concessions to allow those whose communities were formed in the crucible of industrialization to continue to enjoy an education in English and a substantial measure of decentralized government (if desired). The mere *toleration* of compromises in everyday life (such as the language-switching that anthropologists have helped to document for Ukraine) would not suffice. The rights of those whose mother tongue is not the official language of the state should be formally recognized and protected in law.

   Obviously, the analogy between Ukraine and Wales can only be taken so far. It is easy to push the analysis of Welsh peoplehood back into the early Middle Ages, thanks above all to the Celtic language (which does not allow for easy language-switching with English). This case is clearly colonial. Shared east Slav heritage meant that the proponents of Ukrainian peoplehood had to work with very different materials.
10. At this point, the original version of this paper included a section dealing with "post-socialist political economy." It outlined why, in my view, the West (especially the USA) bears much of the responsibility for the ongoing tragedy in Ukraine. My argument was that, now as in the past, identities are being forged through economic and geopolitical contingencies.
11. The word sovereignty can be stretched in countless ways (Bryant and Reeves 2021). Historian Józef Chlebowczyk defined the "internal sovereignty of a nation" as "the right to live and work creatively in one's own national community" (1980: 38). He attached particular weight to language. Malinowski would have agreed with this – and therefore questioned the wisdom of allocating millions of citizens whose mother tongue was Russian to a Ukrainian state.
12. Contemporary anthropologists have contributed to a relativizing of the concept of sovereignty by exploring imaginaries beyond the state (Bryant and Reeves 2021). Yet in the context of Ukraine, such potential is routinely overlooked. Instead, the academic literature has been dominated by so-called postcolonial approaches, underpinned by a vision of Ukraine as a nation-state fighting for freedom, equated with political sovereignty. The practical constraints on sovereignty in the era of neoliberal globalization and the compromises necessary in everyday life have been well documented for a post-Soviet state outside east Slav ethnolinguistic territory by Dace Dzenovska (2022).
13. The Kashubs are presented by Malinowski as an authentic Slavonic tribe which has preserved its ancient culture in spite of centuries of domination by the "superior civilization" of the Germans in this Baltic region. The bottom line of this Preface is that "the real bases of nationality" are to be found in "folk-lore, linguistics and history."
14. In a note that was added by the editors of this posthumous publication, Malinowski urged "the principle of priority in inverse ratio to the aggregate population, wealth, production, and

vested interests of each country" (Malinowski 1944, 334). He makes no reference to the distinction between old and new states because (as shown above) this makes no sense according to the tenets of his functionalist synchronism.

It should be noted here that Malinowski's anthropological approach to international relations is the ethical antithesis of the "realist school" (in this context, scholars who urge that Russia be accorded special recognition as a superpower, an equivalent of the USA rather than just another sovereign state). For the Malinowskian anthropologist concerned with freedom, nationalism in Kyiv is to be criticized because of its implications for the citizens of Ukraine and neighbouring states, and not out of deference to the nuclear arsenal at the disposal of the former imperial centre.

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