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Poland and Ukraine are at loggerheads

Poland, hitherto a staunch ally of Ukraine, is suddenly realizing who the country's leaders really are. The Jaroslav Hunk affair in the Canadian Parliament has set the world alight. The entire political class condemned the Ukrainian integral nationalists. A series of disputes is piling up. This turnaround comes at a time when the Republican majority in the US House of Representatives wants to distance itself from the Ukrainian conflict.



Former Prime Minister Jarosław Kaczyński, president of the PiS party, is still pulling the strings of Polish politics.

Poland is governed by the conservative Law and Justice Party (PiS). This political grouping is deeply opposed to the European Union, not only as a supranational project, but also as the unity of the continent. Indeed, throughout its history, Poland has completely disappeared four times. Its powerful Russian and German neighbors have often shared its territory. So the Poles don't want a continental unity that has already enslaved them several times. On the contrary, they remember with nostalgia the period when they asserted themselves in alliance with Lithuania. They therefore promote a third way, between Moscow and Berlin: "Prometheism". It's about freeing oneself from both Russian and German influences, and developing with one's Central European neighbors. This is the project of the "Intermarium", known since 2016 as the "Three Seas Initiative": to confederate all the states from the Baltic to the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. Knowing that, for Warsaw, the Three Seas Initiative will eventually replace the European Union, Poland can't count on Brussels. It has found a new ally in the United States, a great power far away and therefore, a priori, not dangerous.

This alliance was illustrated during the war against Iraq. Poland gave its all, out of loyalty to its new ally. It used the funds made available by the European Union to upgrade its economy, to buy... US fighter jets.

Polish distrust of the Russians should not mask their distrust of the Germans. Last week, the German Chancellor, Olaf Scholz, tried to interfere in the Polish election campaign by insisting that the visa scandal was continuing. Piotr Wawryk, Deputy Foreign Minister, has already resigned after it was revealed that his administration was selling Polish visas for 5,000 euros. This new accusation has no basis in fact, but it was supposed to cast doubt on the PiS administration. Zbigniew Rau, Poland's Minister of Foreign Affairs, took it very badly. He bluntly reminded Germany to respect its sovereignty.

While the majority of Poles support the nationalism of the PiS, the opposition is organized around the Civic Platform of former European Council President (2014-19) Donald Tusk. As a child, Tusk played with former German Chancellor Angela Merkel. The two families knew each other and had the privilege of traveling within the Eastern bloc. Donald Tusk hoped to win this time against the PiS. He took on board Brussels' accusations against Mateusz Morawiecki's government and the PiS's conception of freedom. He relied on the fact that Brussels has still not paid out the subsidies allocated under the Recovery and Resilience Fund (FRR). However, current events are not in his or the EU's favor.

At the start of Russia's special military operation in Ukraine, Warsaw declared its solidarity with Kiev because Washington was calling for mobilization against Moscow. It seemed normal to give asylum to 1.5 million Ukrainians and to integrate this former Soviet country into the "Three Seas Initiative". However, the Poles knew no more than anyone else about what was really happening in Ukraine. Historically, they remembered that Ukrainian "integral nationalists" had supported the Nazis and massacred 120,000 Poles under their orders. However, since the break-up of the Soviet Union, they had accepted many Ukrainians as immigrant workers. They therefore took it upon themselves to charitably receive the wives and children of their poor neighbors.

The PiS government then banned any criticism of Volodymyr Zelensky's Ukraine, interpreting it as "Russian propaganda". Right from the start of the war, the Polish Defense Council forbade Internet operators from relaying the Voltaire.net website and Voltaire Network articles in the country. This military censorship prevented the Polish ruling class from understanding what the Zelensky government was really about. Poland has become Ukraine's main military ally, after the United States.

On September 22, 2023, the Canadian House of Commons welcomed President Volodymyr Zelensky for a solemn speech. After his speech, the presiding officer, Anthony Rota, introduced a member of the audience as "a Ukrainian-Canadian veteran of the Second World War who fought for Ukrainian independence against the Russians" and as both "a Ukrainian hero and a Canadian hero", a member of the "1st Ukrainian Division". Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, parliamentarians and the public applauded wildly. Immediately, however, outraged Jewish associations protested: the "1st Ukrainian Division" is the SS Galicia! After three days of controversy, Anthony Rota apologized to the Jews and eventually resigned. But the Polish ambassador, Witold Dzielski, would have none of it. He demanded an apology for the insult to the 120,000 Poles massacred by Ukrainian mainstream nationalists. Przemyslaw Czarnek, Poland's Minister of Education, began extradition proceedings against the former SS officer.

In an instant, the Ukrainian bluff was cleared in the eyes of the Poles. As Beata Szydło, former PiS Prime Minister and now Member of the European Parliament, has pointed out, the problem is not Anthony Rota's ignorance, but the attitude of the Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, and Canadian Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland (co-editor of the *Encyclopedia of Ukraine*). None of these personalities can claim to be unaware of what the "1st Ukrainian Division" of sinister memory was. Yet none of them showed the

slightest embarrassment and warned Prime Minister Justin Trudeau of what was happening. On the contrary, they applauded with pride.

Incidentally, the Ukrainian hero was not a member of the SS combat troops. He belonged to a reprisal unit, tasked with murdering people who resisted the Third Reich.

So how can we fail to remember that the two most important battles of the Ukrainian war were fought in Marioupol and Bakhmut? Both were fought under the command of the military leader of the Integral Nationalists, Andriy Biletsky, alias the "White Führer", with whom President Zelensky was filmed a month ago.

Suddenly, the Poles realize that they acted hastily in granting Ukraine observer status in the "Three Seas Initiative". It is obvious that, although Jewish, Volodymyr Zelensky is leaning on the "mass murderers of Jews", as Israeli general Benny Gantz put it.

The Canadian incident comes at a time when Polish farmers are up in arms against unfair competition from the US-Ukrainian food industry. Three US agribusiness multinationals, Cargill, Dupont and Monsanto, have bought up a quarter of Ukraine's territory. They import their cereals and chickens into the European Union at unbeatable prices. They don't pay for their GMO seeds donated by the US State Department. The European Commission had initially banned their imports, knowing that these products did not meet EU standards, but bowed to US pressure. Three states, including Poland, passed laws banning them. However, President Zelensky has announced that, as these states are members of the EU, he is taking them to the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Agriculture is Poland's main source of income. In the midst of a legislative election campaign, the question of Ukrainian imports is at the center of debate. The right-wing Confederation party came out on top. The PiS would then be forced to form an alliance with it to stay in power. The Minister of Agriculture addressed the Ukrainian people. He told them that taking Poland to the WTO would seriously damage relations between the two countries. But nothing happened.

At the same time, the Polish population as a whole is becoming exasperated with the steady stream of Ukrainian refugees. The Polish president, Andrzej Duda, has spoken of a possible halt to aid to Ukrainian refugees, given the opposition they are now encountering in public opinion. He compared Ukraine to a drowning country that poses a danger to its rescuer: sometimes a drowning person struggles helter-skelter and drags his rescuer with him.

Finally, the only state for which Poland has any reverence is the Holy See. Yet Ukraine has just curtly voiced its opposition to the Holy Father, whom it accuses of not hating Russian culture. In so doing, it has released Poland from its commitments to him.

The PiS government then decided to revive the Przewodów affair. On November 15, 2022, missiles fell on this Polish village, not far from the Ukrainian border, killing two people and destroying agricultural facilities. Initially, they were attributed to Russia, but fearing that Poland might provoke a world war, the United States revealed that they were Ukrainian. The case was hushed up. The Ukrainian judiciary has just revealed its investigation report. It confirms what Washington was saying. Poland should therefore demand reparations from Ukraine.

The Canadian incident is not over. For the moment, neither the Slovaks nor the Slovenes, who were victims of the SS Galicia, have received an apology. Moreover, the Polish-Ukrainian quarrel will not be without consequences. Firstly, because today Polish territory is the main transit base for Western aid to the Ukraine. Secondly, it will have repercussions on the Baltic States, particularly Lithuania.

Translation

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