

Świątek, Adam. *Gente Rutheni, Nazione Poloni: The Ruthenians of Polish Nationality in Habsburg Galicia*

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That identities were fluid under Habsburg rule has been underscored by much research in recent decades. The choices available to inhabitants of the Crownland of Galicia have been less extensively covered than for other parts of Cisleithania, the assumption being that Poles and Ruthenians differed by not only language but also religion. Roman Catholics were seemingly destined to become Poles, Greek Catholics to become Ukrainians. The present book by Adam Świątek reminds us how that outcome was far from certain. For much of the long nineteenth century, it was not determinism but rather fluidity and flux that were the rule. Ideas of who constituted the Polish nation were evolving, and the national loyalties of the Ruthenians—the precursors to modern-day Ukrainians—were also far from set in stone.

The book under review deals with the phenomenon of Greek Catholics of Ruthenian provenance who considered themselves to be part of a larger Polish nation. These individuals with a two-tiered identity were the titular *gente Rutheni, natione Poloni*, the Latin phrase declaring they were of Ruthenian stock, yet of the Polish nation. It is altogether fitting that this book, a translation from the Polish, reaches an English-language audience thanks to a joint venture between the publishing arm of the Jagiellonian University and the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies. A preface by Frank Sysyn, whose first monograph dealt with a much earlier version of the same phenomenon, sets the stage for the study, as does the extensive introduction by Świątek, where terms are defined and the extant scholarship on the subject (much of it dating from the early twentieth century) is presented.

At 555 pages of text, the book is much more than a prosopography of this option, chosen by a relatively small number (if one hard to quantify) of individuals—an option that ultimately proved to be a historical dead end. But need it have been? Let us not forget that Greek Catholic clergymen were long fluent in Polish, which was the language of upward mobility. As shown in chapter 1, which deals with the parameters of the phenomenon more broadly, the two-tiered identity of *gente Ruthenus, natione Polonus* was the conscious choice of a number of upwardly mobile rural dwellers turned urbanites whose education propelled them into the ranks of the Galician intelligentsia. Chapter 2 demonstrates the importance of Rus' in the historical consciousness of nineteenth-century Poles, with literature in particular playing an important role.

Chapters 3–7 comprise the chronologically organized bulk of the book, which covers the entire period of Habsburg rule. The reach of Polish culture as well as language is shown in chapter 3, dealing with the period from the partitions through 1846: a cross-section of Galician Ruthenians, seemingly nationally indifferent, participated in the fight for Polish independence. The radical (emancipatory) views held by some Polish insurrectionists had attracted some of them. The book's author even suggests that this advocacy of peasant emancipation may help explain why the Ruthenian peasantry—in contrast to the “Polish” peasants of western Galicia—did not massacre Polish nobles in 1846.

Chapter 4 presents the key political moment for this option: the revolutionary year of 1848. Hoping to speak for Ruthenians more generally, the *gente Rutheni, natione Poloni* established the Ruthenian Sobor, in this way differentiating themselves from the Supreme Ruthenian Council of the St. George (clerical) faction, which with time would lean dangerously toward Russia—precisely the opposite tack taken by the pro-Polish Ruthenian Sobor. By labeling Poles as Masurians at the Slavic Congress in Prague, where for a moment a compromise between said Masurians and Ruthenians was reached

(if ultimately never realized), they were emphasizing the fact that, in their view, many ethnic groups comprised the Polish nation.

In chapter 5, on the period of neo-absolutism of the 1850s, *gente Rutheni, natione Poloni* are shown to have played an important role in shaping the Galician education system, which favored the Polish language at a time when the parameters of the Ruthenian language (including whether Latin or Cyrillic script would be used) were still being worked out. The formation importantly served as a foil for the development of a Ruthenian (ultimately Ukrainian) identity that would be neither pro-Polish nor pro-Russian. Chapter 6 focuses on the January Insurrection of 1863–64, fought across the Austro-Russian border under the triune banner of the Polish Eagle, Lithuanian Vytis, and Ruthenian Archangel Michael. Ruthenians of Polish nationality invoked this potent image time and time again during the period of Galician autonomy, covered in chapter 7, one of the longer chapters. Regularly featured was the poem “Our Prayer” by Platon Kostecki: “In the name of the Father, and the Son / It is our prayer, / That the Trinity be one, / One of Poland, Rus’ and Lithuania” (19). Nonetheless, the deputies to the Galician Sejm of this persuasion were outweighed by the great landowners of eastern Galicia, who also claimed to be *gente Rutheni, natione Poloni*, while favoring the last part of the two-tiered identity. All ultimately were trumped by the emergence, as of the 1880s, of ethnographically defined nations in the Galician lands, with no room for genuine two-tiered identities.

The final substantive (and thematic) chapter considers some of the other manifestations of the idea in the public sphere, particularly in the form of commemorations. Świątek mines well various sources—commemorative experiences, “gutter publications” (316), and textbooks, as well as literature, memoirs, diaries, and even artistic works—in addition to the traditional sources of political history. All told, *Gente Rutheni, Natione Poloni: The Ruthenians of Polish Nationality in Habsburg Galicia* may be read with profit by scholars and students interested in the various choices made by nineteenth-century Galicians.