

The Black Sea and Turkey in Ukrainian Geopolitical Thought of the XXth Century

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The Black Sea from the very beginning of Ukrainian Statehood was a focus of attention of Kyiv State rulers. First of all as an important way towards the South – from Scandinavia to Byzantium. Military actions and peace treaties between Ruthenia and Byzantium were conditioned by the needs of economic ties between the states, of commercial exchanges. Constantinople opened for Ukrainian merchandises the road further to the Middle Eastern countries. Invasions of nomads and expansion of Western neighbours stopped the development of the Ukrainian State. It revived only in the mid-XVIIth century in the years of the national liberation war under the helm of Bogdan Khmelnytsky.

But before this in the XVth century very important geopolitical changes took place: the Black Sea became a closed sea of the Ottoman Empire, taking into account the fact that the Crimean Khan became a vassal of the Sultan. The appearance of the Ukrainian Cossacs restrained the march forward of Turkish armies in Northern Black Sea territories, but periods of military clashes (mainly with the Sultan's subjects – Crimean Tatars and Nogays) interchanged with periods of peaceful trade relations. These years

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saw the first treaties between The High Porta and the Cossac State. Bogdan Khmelnytsky always took into account the Black Sea factor in his foreign policy.

After the taking up of the Cossac Republic by the Moscow State that was completed in 1775 and the annexation of the Crimea (1783) Ukraine ceased to be a subject of international relations (alike the Crimea) and a long period of stateless existence started for the Ukrainian people. The genius of Tarass Shevchenko (1814-1961) woke up Ukrainian society and step by step the first sprouts of civic activities and political journalism appeared. But if there is no a sovereign state, no geopolitical thought can develop. In Ukraine geopolitical thought appears with appearance of an idea of an independent Ukrainian State. At the end of the XIXth century simultaneously in the East and West of Ukraine a rather clear idea of the necessity to create an independent Ukrainian state was born. It goes about the publication in 1895 in Western Ukraine of the pamphlet "Ukraine *irredenta*" by Yulian Bachynsky, and in the East of Ukraine was published a pamphlet by Mykola Mikhnovsky "An independent Ukraine" in 1900. Evidently a Ukrainian sovereign state did not exist but a vision of it, an idea appeared.

Therefore on the eve of WWI a question about geopolitical orientation of Ukraine, at that time torn into two parts by two empires, was put down. Quite naturally such a factor as the Black Sea drew attention. In 1914 a book entitled "A Short Geography of Ukraine" (2nd part) by the young professor Stepan Rudnytsky was printed in Lviv. In this book he stressed particularities of geographical situation of Ukraine: it has a large exit to the Black Sea, which in its turn is tied by Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits with the Mediterranean Sea and further with Asia Minor and Africa. In particular he wrote: "Not far away is the realisation of a plan to unite the Baltic Sea with the Black Sea via the Dvina and the Dnieper rivers by a canal accessible for sea ships... In such a way the landlocked character of the Black Sea will become weaker and namely through Ukraine one grand seaway will go".

So the Black Sea entered the sphere of topics which turned out to be under view of Ukrainian political elite. The first who elaborated a geopolitical doctrine for Ukraine taking into account such a factor as the Black Sea was Prof. Mykhaylo Hrushevsky (1866-1934), a prominent historian, the first President of the Ukrainian Democratic Republic (UNR). In 1918 he wrote a treatise entitled "At the threshold of New Ukraine" consisting of several essays among which there was an essay "The Black Sea Orientation" and its prolongation – an essay named "New Perspectives". It is practically an exposure of geopolitical doctrine that would have served as a guide at working out foreign policy strategy of the Ukrainian State.

The well known scholar remarks that "historical life conditions led Ukraine to the West", when "geographic conditions led and have been leading to the South, to the Black Sea ...". And further he says: "In the South the Black Sea tightly tied our coast with the coast of Asia Minor, and through it with the realm of ancient cultures – Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Aeghean... The Black Sea had not divided but tied the coastal countries". He realised that from a civilizational point of view Ukraine belongs to the West and recommended to learn in the West, first of all in Germany and USA. At the same time he underscored: "But when these countries of Western culture must serve as a school for us, the field of our activities, of our own creativity must be countries that like Ukraine, grew in influences and connections of Eastern culture – countries in the sphere of our Black Sea orientation tied by the Black Sea as a center of communications and of different cultural and political relations". In Ukrainian politicum Prof. M. Hrushevsky shared ideas of "federalists" but he comes out against "a forced federation", on the contrary he preaches a federation of "countries linked geographically, economically and culturally" and remarks: "And as a first step of such a federation... I consider economic and cultural collaboration, cooperation of the Black Sea nations". He stresses that "when tightly interlinked - these Black Sea countries can form an extraordinary rich, grand and multifunctional base.

In these words of Prof. Hrushevsky we see a beginning of the idea which nowadays has led us to the creation of GUAM and BSEC.

The topic of "Black Sea orientation" for the development of our country was largely referred to in the works of Prof. S. Rudnytsky (1877-1937) immediately after the end of WWI, when Ukraine seemed to lose all chances to become an united independent state. His paper "The Ukrainian Case from the point of view of Political Geography" published in Vienna in 1923 has shown importance of the Black Sea in historical retrospective and drew some landmarks for the future.

One more scholar, Prof. A. Syniavsky (1866-1951) tried to consider Ukraine and its economy from a geopolitical point of view i.e. taking into account its historical and geographical peculiarities in relation to Middle Eastern countries, especially Turkey. In this connection his article "UkrSSR and the Near East in the light of Geopolitics. (Problems of commercial relations)", which was published in 1928 in the review "Skhidnyi Svit" is of special significance. In this article Prof. A. Syniavsky, as Prof. Rudnytsky before him, considers in detail Ukraine's geographic situation in dynamics of historic development, but he is also taking into account realities of the period showing the importance of the territory of our country for transit

and its role as a country of a relatively high industrial development in the region.

Prof. A. Syniavsky wrote: "Ukraine is also a part of humanity and a part of the the Earth that can form an economic complex with Middle Eastern countries on the principles of the most appropriate division of labour and production exchange". His conclusions are supported by numerous statistic data. Certain opportunities for Ukrainian-Turkish commerce he sees in particular, as it is stated in his paper, "in connection with vigorous New Turkey policy of intensification and industrialization".

There were other authors who dealt with problems of Ukrainian-Turkish relations (O. Hrushevsky, V. Dubrovsky, S. Lerman) but the Stalinist regime liquidated Oriental studies in Ukraine and all research work in this field was stopped.

Ukrainian geopolitical thought continued to develop though outside the boundaries of the USSR. The most important role was played by a young scientist Dr. Yuri Lypa (1900-1944). In the 30-ies in Europe everything predicted a new big war and a vision of an independent Ukraine appeared again. Ukrainian political emigration believed that a clash of the forces of Hitlerism, Stalinism and The West can open a way for Ukraine's liberation. In 1938 a book by him entitled "The Predestination of Ukraine" was published in Lviv. The quintessence of the geopolitical analysis presented in it was a simple thesis: "Only the axis South - North is the axis of Ukrainian territory". Next year former ambassador of Ukraine in Istanbul Olexander Lototsky (1870-1939) published his memoirs "In Istanbul" where he recounted the practical collaboration of Ukrainians and Turks in years that turned out to be difficult for both nations.

Next year (under German occupation) a work by L. Bykovsky (1895-1992) appeared as a manuscript (in the technique of *cyclostyle*). It's title was "Turkey. Bibliografic materials". As an epigraph to it Mr. Bykovsky took words from O. Lototsky's publication. Here they are: "The invincible force of life acts in such a way that historical neighbours - Turkey and Ukraine - while not always being in agreement in the past, in the future will reach mutual understanding of uttermost necessity for both countries to acheive unity in politics, economics and culture". The author himself (L. Bykovsky) wrote: "History and the present show that the principal partner of Ukraine in creating the Black Sea Reality is no doubts Turkey. Romania, Bulgaria, the Caucasus stand further".

It is necessary to note that this was written when Ukrainian political activities on territory occupied by Germans were practically illegal. In Warsaw the Ukrainian Black Sea Institute functioned illegally but Ukrainian scientists

menaged to publish in *cyclostyle* some papers on geopolitics. The first publication (as a manuscript) of the Institute (No 1) was a treatise by Y. Lypa "The Black Sea Doctrine" (Warsaw, 1940). In 1941 an atlas "The Black Sea Space" was issued too.

Y. Lypa in the spirit and terms of the times presented in detail the situation in the Black Sea region from a geopolitical point of view and especially singled out the role of M. Kemal Atatürk. The chapters "Awareness of Unity" and "A Union of Black Sea Countries" are written in the spirit of Prof. Hrushevsky's "The Black Sea Orientation". Here we see how his previous constructions are approaching real politics. This visionary treatise needs a separate profound study.

In a more direct way L. Bykovsky said about the cooperation of the Black Sea countries in the "Postface" to his already mentioned bibliographic materials: "Ukrainian-Turkish relations cannot be cherished in the future just by orientalists, historians and diplomats – they must concern masses. Turkey, Ukraine and other countries that belong to the Black Sea Space are all parts of a common Motherland for those living here. Therefore the Turkish interests must be very close to Ukrainians as the Ukrainian interests – to Turks". It is a characteristic feature that reflexions of Ukrainian geopoliticians do not contain any expansionist ideas. Foreign Minister of the UNR O. Shulghyn for example wrote: "Not now nor in the future Ukraine seeks any exploitation of its neighbours and less more the enslavement of those living on its soil or those living side by side in the basin of the Black and Caspian Seas".

When it was possible, Ukrainian geopolitical thought always turned its attention to Black Sea issues. In this connection it is worth noting that after WWII a known Ukrainian orientalist Vasyl Dubrovsky (1897-1966) as an emigrant actively collaborated with the Turkish-language journal "Dergi" (Munich). There he published several articles devoted to Soviet policies concerning Turk peoples and the history of Ukrainian Orientalistics. They were re-published in Almaty in Turkish (2006) by Dr. Sebahattin Şimşir. V. Dubrovsky also published an important research work "Turkey between Devil and Deep Sea" which appeared in Ukrainian as a manuscript in 1947. In this paper the Ukrainian author examined the history of Russian expansionist policies concerning the Turkish Republic after the end of WWII, analysed it and condemned it. He evaluated from the point of view of geopolitics the situation of Turkey as well as those of Ukraine and their interests, connecting the security of Turkey with that of Ukraine. At the end of his research he writes: "in case the Soviets would have locked the Black Sea-Aegean Straits with their troops and fortifications, it would have signified the closure of the last air-hole from Ukraine to the external world (after the

Soviets have shut the Ukrainian link with Europe in the West by a ring of vassal states). But if the straits remained open and Turkey free from Soviet influence, a rescue for Ukraine could most easily come from the Black Sea South, and not from the Baltic North”.

“The Black Sea Doctrine” by Y. Lypa has not lost its significance today either. The semi-ring “Balkans-Black Sea-Caucasus-Caspian”, which is bordering the Middle East and forms with it a certain entity possesses enormous deposits of oil and gaz but at the same time is a region of permanent instability. This must be the basic point of departure for Ukraine and Turkey when they form their policy and organize scientific research in this area.

After the proclamation of independence geopolitical problems took appropriate place in the programmes of Ukrainian scientists. It became clear that Ukraine and Turkey together can in a very positive way influence the strengthening of stability in the region. Both countries will have a possibility of doing so by taking part on equal footing in activities of European and Euro-Atlantic organizations and institutions.