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On behalf of Professor Yauling Hsieh, I would like to express our deep sense of gratitude to the organizers of the Polish-Ukrainian conference held at Taras Shevchenko National University in Kyiv, Ukraine May 23–25, 2018. We are indebted to many individuals from this university and from Bialystok University, too, for their graciousness in making possible a Taiwanese and Ukrainian academic encounter by including us as an extra dimension of the conference agenda. We are also very appreciative of the warm hospitality showered upon us during those summer days in May spent in the Ukrainian capital. Our first visit to Ukraine provided us with opportunities to get to know firsthand the openness and good nature of the Ukrainian people, the delights of Ukraine's cuisine, the richness of its musical and religious culture, the tragedy and triumphs of its historical past and its hopes for the future.

We also came to appreciate the robust cultural relations between Poland and Ukraine and the mutual good will manifested by representatives of the two nations. Both Poles and Ukrainians have a strong historical consciousness, and the attention paid to historical issues in reconstructing their modern national identity was evident in conference presentations. Poland's supportive role in the national revival of Ukraine is shown by the fact it was the first nation to recognize Ukrainian national independence

on December 2, 1991. Poland has since continued to serve as a model for Ukraine in developing its economy and democracy.

In an era of globalization it is fitting to bring together Ukraine and Taiwan, two countries from different parts of the world, separated by geographic, linguistic and cultural barriers, yet united by common struggles and aspirations. In these increasingly uncertain times, Taiwan and Ukraine, in spite of the essential good will of their people, continue to be two of the world's hotspots, with hostile armies gathering at their borders and advanced weaponry aimed at strategic sites. Thus, it behooves the public to learn more about their struggle for cultural identity and national sovereignty. The contingent from Taiwan attempted to contribute to this understanding and the bringing of the two seemingly disparate nations closer together by examining common themes in Taiwanese and Ukrainian literary works. Complex issues of national identity, colonialism, language, cultural hegemony, self-fulfillment and cold war politics and the coerciveness of the totalitarian state are some of the aspects of the literary works that were presented. The works chosen are characterized by their protagonists' attempts to address the impact of Japanese colonization and Chinese cultural superiority on the Taiwanese intellectual and the dominating political and cultural influence of Russia on his Ukrainian counterpart in order to come to terms with their sense of self-worth and identity while promoting national ideals, on the one hand, and the individual's ability to withstand dehumanizing and coercive attempts by the state to conform to its ideologically rigid dictates in the Cold War setting of Ukraine and Taiwan – on the other.

Professor Hsieh, who received her training in Comparative Literature at the University of Illinois in the United States, chose the theme of education as a means of arriving at self-knowledge, self-fulfillment and national identification in two works of fiction. Olena Pchilka's *The Girl Friends* highlights the choices facing Ukrainian female intellectuals in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century in pursuing their ambitions, one opting for the cosmopolitan life to be enjoyed in the Russian capitals while disdaining the Ukrainian folk, their lifestyle, language and traditions, and choosing to marry a German, while the other, Lyuba, is convinced of the purposefulness of serving the Ukrainian people living in the countryside in faithfulness to her Ukrainian identity. Lyubov's hands-on pro-active view of education and nationalism wins her tangible support among the people she serves. She represents an

ideal as a strong-willed independent-minded female who paves the way for her compatriots, male and female alike, to follow.

The representative Taiwanese fictional work Professor Hsieh chooses is *Orphan of Asia* (1945), written by Wu Zhuoliu (1900–1976). The novel offers a powerful depiction of the political, cultural, and psychological impact of Japanese colonialism in the period before and during World War II, and the complexities of language and identity in a colonized state. The central character in this autobiographical novel, Hu Taiming, is a native Taiwanese growing up in the countryside. He is marked both by his Chinese cultural heritage (inspired by his grandfather) and the opportunities for education and advancement through the adoption of the Japanese language when Taiwan was a Japanese colony (between 1895 and 1945). However, he finds that his Japanese education and his adoption of modern ways in the Chinese mainland have alienated him from his family and native village. Ultimately, in spite of his academic success, he remains an outsider in all three cultures, disillusioned and disconsolate.

The second paper of the English-language group focused on the thought and behavior of the individual, one Taiwanese and one Ukrainian, in his relationship with the state. More particularly, it is a study of prison memoirs depicting the political prisoner's response to coercive measures imposed on him by agents of the authoritarian state. Mykhaylo Osadchy's (1936–1994) memoir, *Cataract (Bilmo, 1971)*, is a powerfully evocative response to trumped-up charges of subversion, anti-Soviet agitation and bourgeois nationalism and a riveting description of life in a Mordovian labor camp, a work that posed a strong attack on official Soviet culture. It appears significant to the author that Osadchy grew up in Lviv and that he was a dedicated communist. Lviv, in Western Ukraine, the historical East Galicia, the least Russianized, Sovietized and the least terrorized part of Ukraine, spearheaded the nation's independence movement. Osadchy, as an idealistic communist and representative of the Lviv circle of intellectuals, had a firm belief in the rights stipulated by the Soviet Constitution and had the strength of conviction not to submit blindly to the high-handed dictates of communist authorities. This endowed him with the fortitude to withstand the coercive powers of the state during his years of imprisonment.

The Taiwanese counterpart to Osadchy's memoir is Tsai Tehpen's *Elegy for Sweet Potatoes* (1995). Tsai's fictionalized memoir is a description of

the thirteen-month period (Oct. 1954–Nov. 1955) during which he was incarcerated as a political prisoner and the ordeals he and fellow prisoners underwent. Like Osadchy, Tsai was an idealistic believer in the system and a member of the ruling Kuomintang (KMT) when he was caught up in the extensive network of the anti-communist White Terror campaign in Taiwan at its height in the early fifties. It is a description of his relationship with state agents and police investigators and his efforts to extricate himself from the tangled web of deceit and denunciations characteristic of a police state. His memoir, like Osadchy's is a tribute to his fellow Taiwanese prisoners victimized by the KMT regime.