

THE UKRAINIAN-POLISH CONFRONTATION IN VOLHYNIA IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR: HISTORICAL MEMORY TRANSFORMATIONS

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Abstract: *The conflict between Ukrainians and Poles in the period of the Second World War, known to the general public as „Volhynia tragedy/massacre”, is one of the most problematic and hotly debated issues of the common Polish-Ukrainian history. In recent years there have been a lot of controversial interpretations regarding the assessment of the causes and development of the conflict in Volhynia in 1943-1944, and especially the number of causalities of the conflict on both sides, including different approaches to presentation of the common history events. The problem in question has become the subject of political speculations, negatively affecting the inter-state relations, in general. The search for the ways to transform the historical memory of Ukrainians and Poles and to eliminate interethnic confrontations implies the multifaceted, unbiased elucidation of all aspects of the problem and surmounting the negative socio-historical stereotypes that occur in both societies.*

Keywords: *Ukrainians, Poles, confrontation, inter-ethnic conflict, World War II, transformation, historical memory.*

Rezumat: Confruntarea ucraineano-poloneză din Volhynia în al Doilea Război Mondial: transformările memoriei istorice. *Conflictul dintre ucraineni și polonezi în perioada celui de-al doilea război mondial, cunoscut de publicul larg drept „tragedia / masacrul din Volhynia”, reprezintă unul dintre aspectele cele mai problematice și mai dezbătute ale istoriei comune polono-ucrainene. În ultimii ani au existat numeroase interpretări controversate referitoare la evaluarea cauzelor și a dezvoltării conflictului din Volhynia în 1943-1944 și, în special, cu privire la numărul victimelor acestuia din ambele tabere, inclusiv abordări diferite ale prezentării evenimentelor istorice comune. Problema în cauză a devenit obiectul unor speculații politice, afectând negativ relațiile interstatale, în general. Căutarea modalităților de transformare a memoriei istorice a ucrainenilor și a polonezilor și de eliminare a tensiunilor interetnice implică elucidarea multiplă și imparțială*

a tuturor aspectelor problemei și depășirea stereotipurilor socio-istorice negative care apar în ambele societăți.

Résumé: La confrontation ukrainien-polonais de Volhynia pendant la Seconde Guerre Mondiale: les transformations de la mémoire historique. *Le conflit entre les Ukrainiens et les Polonais de la période de la seconde guerre mondiale, connu par le public comme «la tragédie/le massacre de Volhynia» représente un des aspects les plus problématiques et plus discutés de l'histoire commune polonaise-ukrainienne. Les dernières années, il y a eu de nombreuses interprétations controversées concernant l'évaluation des causes et du développement du conflit de Volhynia en 1943-1944 et, spécialement, au numéro des victimes de celui-ci des deux camps, y inclus des abords différents de la présentation des événements historiques communs. La question en cause devint l'objet des spéculations politiques, affectant de manière négative les relations interétatiques, en général. La recherche des modalités de transformation de la mémoire historique des Ukrainiens et des Polonais et d'élimination des confrontations interethniques implique la clarification multiple et impartiale de tous les aspects du problème, ainsi que le dépassement des stéréotypes socio-historiques négatifs qui apparaissent à l'intérieur des deux sociétés.*

INTRODUCTION

The history of formation and development of the inter-state relationships between Ukraine and Poland is quite controversial by its nature. Since the statehood inception Ukraine and the Republic of Poland have been constantly in the process of setting up mutual connections, which cannot be defined as being stable and neighbourly due to various historical events and factors. However, it can be asserted, with confidence, that under no circumstances either the Ukrainian or the Polish nation was able to develop separately or independently, without complementary influence.

Ukraine and Poland are closely connected by the common 700-year past, during which both peoples have experienced the periods of good-neighbourliness and rupture, open enmity and even conflicts. The explanation of it implies elucidating some definitely important factors. Firstly, for a long time the two nations had been the subordinates to the same states: the First and Second Rzeczpospolita, Austro-Hungarian, and Russian empires. Secondly, the Ukrainians and Poles were subjected to the violent inter-ethnic confrontation during the Second World War. Thirdly, both nations experienced the effects of the “socialism construction process”, the complexities of totalitarianism, the crisis of the communist regime and its collapse, and then the search for a new model of post-

communist development.¹ All these factors taken together in the context of a certain historical epoch united and, at the same time, disunited and confronted the Ukrainians and Poles. Common historical heritage has given rise to many socio-historical stereotypes and myths, predetermined by the specificity of each nation's historical memory. The historical memory has strongly influenced and still keeps influencing the bilateral relations. Under such conditions of historical coexistence relationships between Ukrainians and Poles obviously could not be balanced and non-conflict. The so-called "cornerstones" of the bilateral relations have led to many misunderstandings and even armed conflicts.

In the time of establishing the independent statehood in Poland and Ukraine, the level of patriotism in both countries was quite low. Historical memorable places that would have become the basis for the formation of a new national identity have been either disregarded or neglected at all. This factual absence of the so-called national collective memory can be argued as a consequence of the Soviet phase of the two nations' historical development. Therefore, it seems logical that in the national environments of both Ukrainians and Poles there has developed a strong, sometimes even hypertrophied, desire to elucidate many of the complex and vague issues of the past, largely those that are common for both nations. The "Volhynia massacre" appeared to be the most complicated issue in the bilateral relations, particularly owing to the fact that there are still living witnesses of the confrontation between Ukrainians and Poles in Volhynia during the Second World War. They live on both sides of the Ukrainian-Polish border and each of them has his/her own recollections and interpretation of those events. The ability to remember the past is an inherent feature of the humans.

One of the central issues of this study is the role of the historical memory in elucidation of the events of the Volhynian tragedy. In accordance with the traditional paradigm, we understand the "historical memory" as the ability of the human mind to preserve the individual and collective experience of interpersonal relationships; on the basis of it is constructed the individual understanding of history. In fact, it can be defined as the information available for the social identification of the individual and the community. Historical memory, both individual and collective, is the result of the interaction of an

¹ Л. В. Стрільчук, *Україна – Польща: від добросусідських відносин до стратегічного партнерства (кінець XX – початок XXI століття)* [Ukraine – Poland: from good-neighborly relationships to strategic partnership (late 20th – early 21st Centuries)], Луцьк, 2013, с. 9.

individual and the social environment. There is no historical memory without this interaction. In other words, historical memory is a kind of a human's identification with a certain culture.

In recent years many historians in the world have become increasingly interested in the problems of the historical memory. Among the many publications the following are worth mentioning P. Nora² and A. Kyrydon³, who have researched the theoretical aspects of the historical memory formation and its components. The works shed light on the events in Volhynia, contributing to a better understanding of their place in the domain of the historical memory content and providing clues to the social identification of an individual and the community. Polish and Ukrainian researchers, especially Eva and Władysław Siemaszko, G. Motyka, W. Wiatrowicz, M. Kuczerepa, V. Visyn, I. Pushchuk, V. Serhiychuk, B. Hud, Y. Hrytsak, and O. Kalishchuk lay emphasis on manifold aspects of the Ukrainian-Polish conflict. The key findings of their studies reveal the causes and consequences of those tragic events.

The goal of this scientific research is the elucidation and balanced scientific interpretation of the causes, course, and consequences of the Polish-Ukrainian conflict in Volhynia during the Second World War, clarifying the influence of the historical events on the historical memory transformation in both Ukrainian and Polish societies. It is aimed at reconciliation of both approaches to the interpretation and evaluation of those events. True, unbiased coverage of historical facts, revealing the uncoordinated moments of the problem, and the disclosure of the facts to the general public is one of the ways of positive transformation of the historical memory concerning the conflict between Poles and Ukrainians in Volhynia, in 1943-1944.

THE CAUSES OF THE CONFLICT AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

In the years of 1943-1944 an unprecedented bloody conflict broke out on the territory of Volhynia, which (as a borderland for several centuries) was inhabited by Ukrainians and Poles. The long-existing conflict exacerbated greatly

² П. Нора, *Теперішнє, нація, пам'ять* [Present, Nation, Remembrance], Київ, 2014, 272 с.

³ Алла Киридон, «Історична пам'ять» у просторі політики пам'яті ["Historical memory" in the space of remembrance policy], in "Історичні та політологічні дослідження. Науковий журнал". Спеціальний випуск: доповіді на міжнародній науково-практичній конференції «Трансформації історичної пам'яті», Вінниця, 2018, с. 45-53 <http://jhpr.donnu.edu.ua/article/view/5112>

in the years of the war, reflecting the tense Ukrainian-Polish relationships of the previous decades. A brief historical analysis of the events that preceded that bloody conflict may contribute to better understanding of the ethnic confrontation between Poles and Ukrainians during the Second World War.

It is a commonly known fact that before the First World War, Volhynia was a part of the Russian Empire like most of the Ukrainian lands. At the end of the First World War, the political situation developed in such a way that since 1918 Volhynia had become the epicentre of the struggle between the two newly-formed states: the independent Ukraine and the Second Polish Commonwealth. In fact, the struggle for Volhynian land began in 1918, when the legions formed by Józef Piłsudski (with the support of the Entente) attacked the young Western Ukrainian People's Republic. Like the Western Volhynia and Western Belarus, this territory had become a part of the Second Rzeczpospolita.⁴ The Polish government tried to turn Poland into a mono-ethnic state by introducing "polonization". According to the archival documents and memoirs of local residents, the Polish authorities confiscated the lands from the Ukrainians and handed them over to the Polish settlers.⁵ Commonly, they were soldiers and the retired officers of the Polish Army, as well as civilian volunteers from among Polish immigrants who lived in the so-called "crown lands" and received land plots on the territories of Western Ukraine (Western Volhynia, Polissia, Eastern Galicia) and Western Belarus during the interwar period. Probably, this fact by itself gave rise to the conflict between the Ukrainian and Polish population. The policy of "pacification" introduced by the Polish government strongly reduced its authority and had aggravated ethnic hatred of the indigenous ethnic groups (the Ukrainians) to the Poles. It also brought about mass arrests of the Ukrainian population in Volhynia and Galicia, violence against civilians, Ukrainian schools and Orthodox churches closure, and prohibition of the Ukrainian public-cultural institutions and organizations.⁶ The oldest and most respected (in that region) cultural public organization – "Prosvita" – was liquidated. This organization had been a promoter of the national

⁴ Л. О. Зашкільняк, М. Г. Крикун, *Історія Польщі: Від найдавніших часів до наших днів* [History of Poland: from the ancient times to present], Львів, 2002, с. 451 – 452.

⁵ *Трагедія українсько-польського протистояння на Волині 1938 – 1944 роки. Володимир-Волинський район* [The Tragedy of the Ukrainian-Polish confrontation in Volhynia in 1938 -1944. Volodymyr-Volhyniaskyi district], І. Pushchuk ed., Луцьк, 2011, с. 113–118.

⁶ Л. Стрільчук, В. Стрільчук, *Інституційні складові українсько-польських гуманітарних взаємин і співробітництва* [Institutional components of the Ukrainian-Polish humanitarian relationships and cooperation], Луцьк, 2013, с. 10.

interests of Ukrainians for more than half a century and carried out its activities on the territories of Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires.

The policy of “pacification” facilitated the radicalization of the Ukrainian resistance on these lands. The Second World War exacerbated relations between Ukrainians and Poles, having deepened pre-war strife and resulted in an inter-ethnic conflict. Yet, it would not be correct to assume that the Ukrainian-Polish confrontation in Volhynia during the war was purely interethnic. It was also strongly influenced by the intervention of the third forces: the Soviet partisans⁷ (among which there were Ukrainians who supported the Bolshevik ideology), the Polish Army Craiova (AK), Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN).⁸ Each of the parties involved in incitement reinforced hostility between Ukrainians and Poles and did it purposely, hoping for political benefits.⁹ On the other hand, it was the civilian population of Volhynia, both Ukrainians and Poles, who suffered greatly of that interethnic hostility, some of them falling victim to this armed confrontation.

The above mentioned facts can be considered as powerful factors that caused escalation of the confrontation and development of the inter-ethnic conflict in Volhynia region in the context of the war. The German occupation exacerbated this interethnic dissension and enmity. The conflict between Ukrainians and Poles had turned into an armed one. The Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) and the Polish Army Craiova appeared to be involved into it. The first priority goal of the Ukrainian nationalist movement in Volhynia was to eliminate the Polish Government claims on the Volhynian land (once it had happened after the First World War)¹⁰. In addition, disloyal and opposing to UPA population was definitely reliable potential support for Germany and the USSR in implementation of their plans. By the beginning of the summer of 1943, UPA forces in Volhynia, according to various sources, numbered from 3 to 5 thousand fighters, and by the

⁷ О. Каліщук, *У тіні Волині? Історія vs пам'ять* [In the Shadow of Volhynia? History vs. Memory], Луцьк, 2016, с. 25–27.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

⁹ G. Motyka, *Od Parośli do Borodycy. «Antypolska akcja» OUN-B i UPA na Wołyniu I w Galicji Wschodniej 1943 – 1945* [From Parośli to Borodychy. «Anti-Polish action" OUN-B and the UPA in Volhynia and Eastern Galicia in 1943 - 1945], in S. Galij-Skarbińska (ed.), *Wołyń 1943. Pamięć złych czasów i symbol pojednania?* [Volhynia 1943. The memory of bad times and a symbol of reconciliation?], Toruń, 2014, p. 28.

¹⁰ B. Hud, *Ukraińcy I Placy na Naddnieprzu, Wołyniu i w Galicji Wschodniej w XIX i pierwsze połowie XX wieku*. [Ukrainians and Poles in Transnistria, Volhynia and Eastern Galicia in the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries], Warszawa, 2018, p. 280 – 283.

end of the year this number had increased to 8-12 thousand.¹¹ The Polish partisan detachments in the region numbered 1,300 soldiers, and about 3,600 armed persons acted as self-defence bases. The Polish police collaborated with the Nazis and participated in the “pacification” of the Ukrainian villages. The police units numbered about 2,000 policemen. The 202nd battalion of the Polish “pomegranate” police arrived from the General Governorate, numbering 360 people to support them.¹² Dozens of nationally conscious Ukrainians of Podlaskie, Chełmszczyzna, Sian region and Łemkowszczyzna, who stood for the Ukrainian state revival, were decimated by the Poles in the first three months of 1943. As a matter of fact, it had happened before the bloody events in Volhynia started. Some of the illustrative facts of the case study are worth mentioning in this regard. On March 1, the representatives of Polish population killed a well-known Ukrainian leader Colonel Jakhov Voinarovskiy in Hrubieszów; on March, 19, the head of the local Support to Ukraine Committee, Mykola Strutynskiy was murdered, and on March 20 and 29, his assistants: Mikhail Novosad and Timofii Stakhurskiy.¹³ This list can be continued.

At that stage of the relationships exacerbation, Volhyniaians had not been involved into the bloody armed conflict of Ukrainian autochthons and Polish colonists. In their appeal to the Ukrainians of the Hrubieszów district on April 25, 1943, the Polish Underground claimed: “We recognize the Germans to be our common enemy, who, to satisfy their own goals, opposed Ukrainians against Poles in one neighbourhood, and the Poles against the Ukrainians in the other, and amuse themselves rejoicing the armed confrontation”. However, further we read: “Poland has always been here and will be. Ukraine has been and will be, but not on the land of Hrubieszów, because Ukrainians has never been masters there and will not ever be. Do not touch the lands of the Hrubieszów. It will not be either German or Ukrainian, but only Polish, and we will defend it until the last drop of

¹¹ В. В'ятрович, *Друга польсько-українська війна* [The Second Polish-Ukrainian War], Київ, 2011, 288 с.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 128-131.

¹³ В. Сергійчук, *Польсько-українське протистояння на Волині у роки Другої світової війни: причини, перебіг і наслідки*. [Polish-Ukrainian Confrontation in Volhynia during the Second World War: Causes, Evolution and Consequencies], in *У пошуках правди: 36. Матеріалів міжнар. наук. конф. «Українсько- польський конфлікт на Волині в роки Другої світової війни: генезис, характер, перебіг і наслідки* [Ukrainian-Polish Conflict in Volhynia during the Second World War: Genesis, Principal Features of the War, the Evolution and Consequencies], Луцьк, 2003, с. 162-191.

blood”.¹⁴ Moreover, the Ukrainians were warned and threatened: per each Polish village deported with the participation of the Ukrainian police, two Ukrainian villages will be burned down, and per each Pole killed by Ukrainians, two Ukrainians will be killed.¹⁵ These threats were quick to come true. On May 6, 1943, Polish gangs killed 6 peasants in Molakhov, 26 inhabitants of Striltsiv, and 4 – in Tuhan. Many patriotic-minded Ukrainians of the Hrubieszów region became victims of an outright terror on May 29.¹⁶

In April-October 1943, new victims from among the Ukrainians in Chełmszczyzna perished of the Polish attacks. Thus, on October 31, 1943, in Hrubieszów there was a memorial burial service to hundreds of peaceful Ukrainians who were murdered. The Ukrainian Central Committee made a statement in connection with these bloody events: “We do not want war with Poland. We did not conceive it. We argue that the Poles, being not provoked in any way by the Ukrainians, launched an imprudent attack on them. In Lublin and Krakow districts hundreds of Ukrainians perished of the attacks of the Polish terrorists, among them the heads and officials of the Ukrainian committees, the men of trust, teachers, priests, solicitors, policemen... In general, all the prominent authoritative citizens fall, and they fall from Polish bullets. Our people are being shot for many months, though we have not initiated that strife. Organized and tolerant Ukrainian citizenship has never allowed anyone to profit on such matters and we will neither allow nor accept expansion of anti-Polish moods, because we do not want a war with the Poles”.¹⁷ However, the repressive actions against Ukrainians in this region continued.

Indeed, we cannot ignore the fact that during the Nazi occupation, in the absence of legitimate power (either Polish or Ukrainian) there were retaliatory armed actions on both sides of the Polish-Ukrainian conflict. The reports of the Soviet partisans mentioned that “many Poles voluntarily collaborate with the Germans, join the police units, and together with Germans destroy the Ukrainian villages, assassinate population, and fight against nationalists”.¹⁸

¹⁴ *Листування з радою Міністрів* [Correspondence with the Council of Ministers], in *Центральний державний архів Вищих органів влади та Управління у м. Києві* (ЦДАВО Укр.), [Central State Archive of the Highest State Power Bodies and Management in Kyiv (TsDAVO of Ukr.)], Ф. 3959, оп. 2, спр. 48, арк. 81.

¹⁵ *Листування з радою Міністрів...*, Ф. 3959, оп. 2, спр. 48, арк. 112.

¹⁶ В. Сергійчук, *Польсько-українське протистояння...*, с. 164.

¹⁷ *Листи та звіти по Українській РСР* [Letters and Reports on the Ukrainian SSR], ЦДАВО Укр., Ф. 3833, оп. 1, спр. 136, арк. 1-3.

¹⁸ В. Сергійчук, *Польсько-українське протистояння...*, с. 165.

A careful study of the documents gives ground to argue that the armed conflict between the two peoples happened on the territory of Volhynia owing to the fact that the armed actions of the Ukrainians against the German invaders started just here, and the occupants managed to quarrel Ukrainians with Poles in Volhynia after the Ukrainian police units (under the orders of the OUN organization) were obliged to struggle against existing regime in the underground and joined the UPA ranks.

In April of 1943, the Nazis and Poles burned down 5 villages: Kostiukhnivka, Vovchits, Yablunka, Dovzhitsa and Zagorivka. And this is the result of only one action on the territory of the Lutsk district. At the same time, the Germans and the Polish "Shuts" Police attacked twice the Krasnyi Sad colony in Horokhivskiyi District, where 22 farms were destroyed and about a hundred of people were shot. In order to provoke the Nazis to anti-Ukrainian actions, the Polish policemen threw "compromat" into each hut – purposely put weapons and grenades into ovens, bunches of straw or some other places. Thus, in consequence of the Polish provocation acts the Germans committed the criminal massacre in several Ukrainian villages on the territory of the Horokhivskiyi district. On April 10, the inhabitants of Kniazhnyi were subjected to the most violent attack: 40 households were burned down and 172 people were killed. The occupants slaughtered the whole families using the lists compiled by the Poles.¹⁹

The Volhynia district delegate to the Government of the Republic of Poland in his appeal of July 28, 1943 clearly described the "true face" of the Polish population defenders in the western regions of Ukraine: "The Bolsheviks come to the Polish villages, offer their assistance in self-defence and in return, recruit Polish youths into their partisan detachments. If they fail in it, they sow panic among the population, rob the Polish defenders of weapons and kidnap people, then quietly escape to the forest. In a couple of days they can be seen at the head of the gangs that attack the same Polish population".²⁰

It happened so that during the Soviet era the very fact of the Ukrainian-Polish conflict was suppressed and disregarded. In the period of 90s of the twentieth century – early 21st century, the majority of historians, both Polish and Ukrainian, laid emphasis only on the losses of the Polish population. The issue of calculating the losses of the Ukrainian population of that time was not considered at all. The first study of the number of victims from the Polish side was carried out

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 168.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 174.

by the Polish scientists Eva and Władysław Siemaszko²¹, but scientists in Ukraine began to elucidate this problem a little bit later. In fact, only in the last decade the problem of calculating the number of the Ukrainian victims of this interethnic conflict has become a hotly debated issue.

The complexity of the calculation is caused by the fact that some of the archival documents were destroyed during the Soviet regime period, and it is quite clear that during the Second World War no calculations were conducted. In addition, a rather long period of time (75 years) separating us from the events under question minimizes the survey data of the witnesses and participants of those events. The local regional studies and church metrical books partly provide an opportunity to count the number of Ukrainian victims of the conflict, and even these incomplete calculations confirm that the number of victims of the conflict on the Ukrainian side is measured by dozens of thousands.

It is important to emphasize that it is really hard to admit the truth of underlying causes of the Polish-Ukrainian conflict without each researcher's awareness of the fact that Volhynia is the Ukrainian land, and the Ukrainians have always lived in the majority here, and they definitely had the right to struggle for the revival of their own state during the Second World War. The recognition of this fact could help historians to comprehend those events as a historical rationale and therefore accept its consequences as a historical regularity. Unfortunately, modern Polish politicians and some of historians refuse to recognize the existence of a mass Ukrainian national liberation movement in Volhynia in the specified period, in particular prof. Władysław Filar²². They try to classify it as "a bandit

²¹ W. Siemaszko, E. Siemaszko, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na ludności polskiej Wołynia. 1939 – 1945*. [Genocide committed by Ukrainian nationalists on the Polish population of Volhynia. 1939 - 1945], Warszawa, Wydawnictwo "Von Borowiecky" T. 1-2, 2000-2008, 1460 s.

²² See: Władysław Filar, *Eksterminacja ludności polskiej na Wołyniu w drugiej wojnie światowej* [Extermination of the Polish population in Volhynia in the Second World War], Warszawa, Światowy Związek Żołnierzy Armii Krajowej, 1999, 149 s.; Idem, *Działania UPA przeciwko Polakom na Wołyniu i w Galicji Wschodniej w latach 1943–1944. Podobieństwa i różnice* [UPA activities against Poles in Volhynia and Eastern Galicia in 1943-1944. Similarities and differences], in Grzegorz Motyka, Dariusz Libionka (eds.), *Antypolska akcja OUN-UPA 1943-1944. Fakty i interpretacje*, Warszawa, Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2002, s. 41-58; Idem, *Wołyń 1939-1944. Eksterminacja czy walki polsko-ukraińskie* [Volhynia 1939-1944. Extermination or Polish-Ukrainian fights], Toruń, Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 2003, 467 s.; Idem, *Wołyń 1939-1944*.

movement". This is a path to a deadlock, from which there is no way out. The communist ideologists, who described the activities of the "Polish Army Craiova" in this way, have already experienced the invalidity of such an approach.

CONTRADICTIONS IN CALCULATING THE NUMBER OF VICTIMS OF THE CONFLICT IN VOLHYNIA (1943 - 1944)

As it was mentioned above, today's Ukrainian historians are faced with the hotly debated number of victims in Volhynia in 1943-1944. In my opinion, the exact number of victims of the conflict cannot be absolutely determined; most likely it will be an approximate figure rounded up to tens of thousands on both sides. Polish and Ukrainian calculations are mainly based on pre-war census figures, and such data are far from perfect for several reasons. Firstly, the census was conducted not on the eve of the war, but several years before it, and consequently, the figures had changed, especially during the years 1939-1941, the period of the so-called "Soviet occupation". It is not a secret that the Soviet authorities carried out repressions, arrests, deportations of the civilian population to Siberia. Secondly, during the years of the war there was a large-scale migration of people: some left their homes escaping from military actions, some were killed during those hostilities, many were deported from the territory for the forced labour to Germany, etc. Thirdly, at the beginning of the Polish-Ukrainian confrontation, many Polish families left Volhynia voluntarily to save themselves. Therefore, we can talk about the number of victims only as approximated to the real possible.

There is every reason to assert that the Polish side operates with extremely inflated figures of victims from the Polish side of conflict. This is especially the point of view of Eva and Władysław Siemaszko, who claim that the number of Polish victims in the Volhynia Voivodeship is about of 60,000²³ (herewith acknowledging that it is quite an approximation) and Grzegorz Motyka²⁴, who

Historia, pamięć, pojednanie [Volhynia 1939-1944. History, memory, reconciliation], Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Rytm, 2009, 271 s.

²³ W. Siemaszko, E. Siemaszko, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich...*, T. 2, s. 1056.

²⁴ See: Grzegorz Motyka, *Tak było w Bieszczadach. Walki polsko-ukraińskie 1943-1948* [So it was in the Bieszczady Mountains. Polish-Ukrainian fights 1943-1948], Warszawa, Wydawnictwo "Volumen", 1999, 551 s.; Grzegorz Motyka, Dariusz Libionka (eds.), *Antypolska akcja OUN-UPA 1943-1944. Fakty i interpretacje*, Warszawa, Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2002, 165 s.; Grzegorz Motyka, *Ukraińska partyzantka 1942-1960*.

announced 100,000 Polish victims on the territory of Volhynia, Eastern Galicia and Chełmszczyzna. Ukrainian historians and experts on region studies argue that the number of victims from the Ukrainian and Polish sides altogether range from 30 to 40 thousand people on each side.

In order to illustrate the exaggeration of the victim number of the conflict in Volhynia during the years of war, it is appropriate to mention some concrete real historical facts. The author of the article has carried out a partial inventory of the burial places of the conflict victims on the territory of the present-day Volhynia region. Thus, the Polish village of Dominopol, on the border between the modern Volodymyr-Volhynskiy and Turiisk districts of the Volhynia region, ceased to exist in 1943. It was burned down by the Ukrainian partisans as a revenge for the support of German punitive actions. As a matter of fact, according to the census made by the Germans in 1940, there were 54 estates in Dominopol, 45 of which were Polish and 9 were Ukrainian, and only 180 people lived in the village. Siemaszko²⁵ considers that in 1943 "250 people of the village were killed, probably Poles were in majority". The Ukrainian researcher I. Pushchuk, referring to a number of Polish sources, cites a number of 160 people. Nevertheless, on the site of the burned village there is a cross erected by the Poles, the inscription on which reads: "To 490 Poles, inhabitants of Dominopol, who died in 1943. Eternal Memory to You! The Compatriots". The number of the possible victims is almost doubled. Moreover, the cross has been erected without any permissive documents from the Ukrainian authorities, arbitrarily, and therefore illegally.

Another example is Okhnyvka, the village on the territory of modern Volodymyr-Volhyniyskiy district of the Volhynia region. Ukrainians lived in this village in the vast majority in the war time. According to the census of the population and the church metrical books there also lived three Polish families (8 persons). There is evidence that one of the Polish families left the village in 1939.

Działalność Organizacji Ukraińskich Nacjonalistów i Ukraińskiej Powstańczej Armii [Ukrainian partisans of 1942-1960. Activities of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army], Warszawa, Rytm, 2006, 720 ss.; Idem, *Od rzezi wołyńskiej do akcji "Wisła". Konflikt polsko-ukraiński 1943-1947* [From the Volhynian Massacre to the "Wisła" action. Polish-Ukrainian conflict 1943-1947], Kraków, Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2011, 520 s.; Idem, *Cień Kłyma Sawura. Polsko - ukraiński konflikt pamięci* [The shadow of Kłym Sawur. Polish-Ukrainian conflict of memory], Gdańsk, Wydawnictwo Oskar. Muzeum II Wojny Światowej w Gdańsku, 2013, 120s.; Idem, *Wołyń '43*, Kraków, Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2016, 285 s.

²⁵ W. Siemaszko, E. Siemaszko, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich...*, T. 1, s. 914-916.

We cannot deny that there was an assassination of the Poles by Ukrainians in this village. It is a confirmed fact, indeed, but another fact strikes. When entering the village, you can see a memorial sign similar to the Dominopol cross, on which it is inscribed, that in the village of Okhnivka, 168 Poles perished “of the hands of Ukrainians” (in other words, they were killed by the Ukrainians). Unfortunately, there are no documents or evidence that could confirm the acceptability of this number. By the way, as in the first case, the local authorities did not give any permission to erect the cross, so it was installed arbitrarily, and accordingly, the figures on it do not have any certainty or credibility. In this case the number of victims is exaggerated at least 20 times.

We can offer dozens of such and similar examples, and they themselves testify to the far-fetched and obvious exaggeration of the figures of the victims of the conflict, at least from the Polish side. On the other hand, in Volhynia there are many villages, such as Krasnyi Sad of Horokhivskyi District, Honchyi Brid of Kovel District, Stenzharychi of Volodymyr-Volhynianskyi District, which were destroyed by the Poles, burned down, and all their inhabitants were killed. The historical memory does not recognize the one-sidedness in the elucidation and interpretation of the facts. Speculation on the tragic pages of history does not add credibility and reconciliation to either of the sides.

TRANSFORMATION OF THE HISTORICAL MEMORY OF THE UKRAINIANS AND POLES

It must be admitted that such a keen interest to the problems of the common history of Ukrainians and Poles have arisen only in the recent years. The study has revealed that during the last quarter of the century a lot of new mutually positive visions and stereotypes of two neighbouring nation attitudes to each other have been formed. Contemporary Ukrainians associate Poles with economic progress, successful reforms, prosperity, and stability. For the Poles, a Ukrainian is a good-natured, diligent immigrant worker, a hospitable and friendly neighbour: Ukraine is also a strategic partner. There is a noticeable tendency towards constant growth of positive mutual perception of Poles among Ukrainians and vice versa. The poll of 2000 in Ukraine showed that the Poles are in third place regarding the Ukrainians' adherence to them²⁶. In the period of

²⁶ О. Стогній, *Ксенофобією ми не страждаємо: українсько-польські відносини*. [We do not suffer from xenophobia: Ukrainian-Polish relations], in *Україна і світ сьогодні* [Ukraine and the world today], 2000, с. 7.

2001-2010 the number of those who perceive the Republic of Poland as a good neighbour has increased greatly in Ukraine; the typical Pole is perceived as a religious person and, at the same time, an enterprising one. It is evidenced by the results of a nationwide survey "The Perception of Poland and Poles in Ukraine".²⁷ Overcoming negative stereotypes in relation to each other and the formation of new, more positive in the minds of neighbouring peoples is an important component of the harmonious development of human relations²⁸. The institutional components of this type of interaction are quite diverse and multifaceted, and it is this fact that contributes to the spiritual convergence of Ukrainians and Poles and promotes integration of the two cultures.

Modern Ukrainian and Polish societies are experiencing a period of historical memory transformation, and the remembrance and reconsideration of the inter-ethnic Polish-Ukrainian conflict in Volhynia during the Second World War is an important element of it. Unfortunately, both societies have not yet managed to overcome and reject all the negative stereotypes. The main reasons for this, in our opinion, are the following:

- it is rather difficult to reverse deep-rooted prejudice syndrome in the minds of the older generation; it may take a long time, sometimes even generation change;

- the lack of economic and cultural attractiveness of Ukraine for Poland. The Republic of Poland has never considered Ukraine as a financial or technological partner; all the hopes and expectations of Poland for cooperation are definitely associated with the West;

- for the Polish society, the vast majority of which professes Catholicism, Orthodoxy and Greek Catholicism, the spiritual religious situation in Ukraine is alien and incomprehensible, and therefore the religious factor influences the public consciousness sufficiently;

- the issues of the common Ukrainian-Polish history have been in the focus of the political statements of the Polish political elite in the period from 2013 to 2016. Those claims exacerbated the historical accents of the Polish society on the conflict moments of the past and the events of the Second World War in Volhynia, in particular.

²⁷ Т. Градоблянська, *Відносини з Польщею – пріоритет для кожного четвертого українця* [Relationships with Poland – top priority for every fourth Ukrainian], in *Голос України* [Voice of Ukraine], 2010, с. 19.

²⁸ П. Нора, *Теперішнє...*, с. 168.

Let us consider the last item in detail to illustrate the problems of historical memory modern transformation. It becomes even more important in the context of the most recent statements made by the Polish political elite that caused great changes in the public opinion of the Poles concerning their eastern neighbours: the Ukrainians.

July of 2016 will enter the history of the Ukrainian-Polish remembrance discourse as a dividing line of disagreement, having nullified the achievements of the quarter-of-a-century dialogue of the intellectuals and political elite of the two countries. On July 22, the Sejm of the Republic of Poland voted for the resolution “On Determining July 11 the Day of Remembrance of the Poles, Victims of the Genocide Committed by the OUN-UPA”. The Sejm’s decision made the Ukrainian historians accept their defeat in the bilateral dialogue. As Yaroslav Hrytsak stated in his interview with one of the Internet publications: “I have to admit: it is too late to lock the stable-door when the horse has been stolen; and we have lost the «horse». I consider it a personal defeat and I am ready to take responsibility, but I am not going to give up. We lost the battle, not war. And this war seems to be quite long. Therefore, it is better to regroup forces and think of a new attack”.²⁹ The same decision of Polish authorities produced a kind of shock for the Ukrainian society, especially when we consider the quantitative results of the voting: 442 deputies voted for the resolution, 0 - against and only 10 deputies abstained. In fact, all the previous developments and progress in the domain of harmonization and interpretation of the common history appeared to be in vain. It concerns, first of all, the long-term dialogue of scientists on the issues of harmonization of the views on the common history. There were several significant events promoting this process: the joint statement of the presidents of Ukraine and the Republic of Poland “To Mutual Understanding and Unity” of May 21, 1997, opening of the memorial to the Ukrainian-Polish reconciliation in the Volhyniaian village Pavlivka in 2003, where the Presidents of both countries, L. Kuchma and A. Kwaśniewski were present; the elaboration of a common position concerning the creation of the “Eaglets' Memorial” in Lviv and later, on June 24, 2005 opening the memorial to the soldiers of the Ukrainian Galician Army, who perished in the battles for Lviv. The opening ceremony of “Eaglets Memorial” at the Lychakiv cemetery was attended by the presidents V. Yushchenko and A. Kwaśniewski.

²⁹ Я. Грицак, *Українсько-польські гуманітарні взаємини в 1991 – 2001 рр. шлях України та Польщі до прощення* [Ukrainian-Polish humanitarian relationships in 1991-2001: the Path of Ukraine and Poland to forgiveness], in “Новое время”, 2016, с. 2.

Another event worth mentioning is opening of the Monument-Memorial to the Ukrainians in the village of Pawlokoma in the Republic of Poland on May, 13 2016 (with the participation of the presidents V. Yushchenko and L. Kaczyński). On February 28, 2009 the Presidents of Ukraine and Poland took part in the ceremony of commemorating the victims of the inter-nation confrontation in the years of the Second World War at Guta Peniatska (Ukraine).

The Republic of Poland has not only always been a neighbourly state, a trade partner for Ukraine in the post-Soviet period, but also has become a strategic partner. It means deepening and expanding interstate cooperation in the political, economic and humanitarian spheres.³⁰ However, the human sphere and historical memory as its integral part appeared to be the most problematic and hotly debated issues in recent years. We provide a few examples to illustrate this statement.

1. Sharp aggravation of the issues of historical memory, their transformation toward the formation of negative socio-historical stereotypes is evidenced by the so-called “wars on the graves”, e. i. plundering places of national memory. The chronology of the last three years is a vivid illustration to this:

Year 2014: April of 2014 – at the Greek Catholic Cemetery a monument to the Ukrainian community of the village of Mołodycz of the Jarosław county of Podkarpackie voivodeship was destroyed; March of 2014 – the symbolic grave of the UPA soldiers was desecrated in Hruszowice of the Przemyśl county of the Podkarpackie Voivodeship; May 2014 – a repeated act of vandalism in Hruszowice; July 2, 2014 – at Wierzbica of the Tomaszów Lubelski County of the Lublin Voivodeship a memorial commemorating the Ukrainian victims of the communist repressions was damaged.

Year 2015: a commemorative sign for the UPA soldiers on the mountain Monastyr near the village Werchrata of Lubaczów County in Podkarpackie Voivodeship was profaned; a commemorative sign for the dead Ukrainians in the village Radruż, Lubaczów County of Podkarpackie Voivodeship was damaged; a commemorative sign to the UPA soldiers in the village Białystok Hrubieszów County Lublin Voivodeship was profaned; May 27, 2015 – a memorable sign on the symbolic grave of UPA soldiers in Hruszowice Podkarpackie Voivodeship was damaged.

Year 2016: March 5, 2016 – a monument to the Ukrainian community in the village Mołodycz of the Jarosław county of Podkarpackie Voivodeship was partly destroyed; May 15, 2016 – the graves at the Ukrainian military cemetery in

³⁰ Л. Стрільчук, *Україна – Польща...*, с. 205–206.

the village of Pikulice near Przemysl were plundered; October 9, 2016 – members of the ultra-right organization Obóz Wielkie Polski destroyed the monument on a mass grave of the UPA soldiers in the village Werchrata of Lubaczów County Podkarpackie Voivodeship.

Year 2017: January 8, 2017 – in the village Huta Pienyatska of the Lviv region unknown people destroyed the memorial to the dead Poles erected to commemorate the persons who perished during punitive actions in the Second World War; March 12, 2017, monuments to the victims of the Ukrainian-Polish conflict during the Second World War were painted in red in the village Pidkamin in Lviv region; March 14, 2017 - a commemorative memorial to the Poles in the village Huta Pienyatska of the Lviv region has been damaged the second time this year.

Acts of vandalism in places of national memory, of course, do not add any positive elements to the bilateral inter-nations relations. Their dynamics testifies the transformation of historical memory in both societies in the direction of exacerbation of contradictions in the interpretation and perception of the historical past.³¹

2. In autumn of 2016 a scandalous controversial feature film “Wołyń” by Wojciech Smarzowski was released on the Polish cinematography market. In this context, at least two conclusions can be suggested: the accents aggravation on the complex and negative pages of the common history of the recent past; attempts unilaterally distort the interpretation of the events of the Second World War in Volhynia, in particular the Ukrainian-Polish conflict.

Question arises: what is it aimed at and who benefits? Decree of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland, dated July 22, 2016, and the release of the film “Wołyń” in October 2016, the two consecutive and powerful accents made by the Polish authorities and artists on the Volhynia events of 1943 – 1944, indicate to the aggravation of the problems of historical memory (at least from the Polish side). W. Smarzowski’s film ratings, the number of viewers who watched it, and the number of nominations that were awarded to it in March 2017 confirm that the problem of Ukrainian-Polish confrontation during the Second World War on the

³¹ Eadem, *Історична пам'ять українців та поляків: пошук шляхів примирення чи привід до конфлікту?* [Historical memory of the Ukrainians and Poles: searching the ways to reconciliation or pretext to a conflict?], in “Історичні та політологічні дослідження. Науковий журнал”. Спеціальний випуск: доповіді на міжнародній науково-практичній конференції «Трансформації історичної пам'яті», Вінниця, 2018, с. 179 – 180 <http://jhpr.donnu.edu.ua/article/view/5131>

territory of Volhynia went far beyond textbooks and has become a general social problem in the Republic of Poland. The greatest disappointment is that it happened after an agreement seemed to have been reached in this confrontation in 2003. Unjustifiably brutal scenes of the film, distortion of the historical facts, of course, do not add any positive features to the bilateral interstate relations, but more likely incite Polish society, instilling negative historical and social stereotypes into relationships with their Eastern neighbours -the Ukrainians. Due to the distortion of historical facts, the film "Wołyń" claims to be a leader in the nomination "A film that negatively affected interethnic relations". Nevertheless, the film has broken all the records of Poland over the last ten years. Judging from the number of viewers who watched it, we have to admit that it made a significant impact on the Polish society.³² According to the Polish statistics the consequence of the film release in Poland was mass negative perception the Ukrainians' role in the common history and negative attitudes to the state of Ukraine in general.

3. The assaults on the Ukrainian students in Poland are a vivid illustration of such state policy consequence. Not only the Ukrainian students but the Ukrainian migrant workers also have become objects of the open aggression. On January 17, 2016, local neo-Nazis attacked the workers in the town of Kutno in Łódź Voivodeship. The radicals attacked the hostel, shouting the slogans "Poland for Poles" and "Ukrainians, Get Out". Six Ukrainians came into view of the attackers. Witnesses say that the Poles broke into the room and crashed everything on their way. The attackers were armed with castes, stones and knives. Fortunately, the Ukrainians repulsed the attack, and the hooligans were taken to the police station.³³ These examples are only a small part of a series of similar cases. Such precedents become more and more frequent in Krakow, Przemysl, Lublin and other Polish cities, especially in the eastern provinces.

4. The shelling of the Consulate of the Republic of Poland in Lutsk. It is sad to state the fact that the "third force" arranges various provocations to exacerbate the confrontation in the Ukrainian-Polish relations. The most treacherous was shelling of the Consulate of the Republic of Poland in Lutsk from the grenade launchers on the night of March 29, 2017. As the media

³² А. Нінічук, *Концепт історичної пам'яті як чинник ускладнення українсько-польських взаємин* [Concept of historical memory as a factor of the Ukrainian-Polish relationships perturbation], in *VI Всеукраїнські політологічні читання імені професора Богдана Яроша* [VI All-Ukrainian Political Scientific Reading named after Professor Bogdan Yarosh], 2017, с. 78 - 80.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 78-79.

reported the unidentified people shot the building of the Consulate General of the Republic of Poland in Lutsk, and judging by the size of the hole in the roof, they could have shot from a grenade launcher or other serious weapons. The head of the Foreign Ministry of Ukraine Pavlo Klimkin commented on the event: "I am confused by the provocation against the Polish Consulate General in Lutsk. This is quite a disgraceful action of those who oppose our friendship with the Republic of Poland".³⁴

The above mentioned examples negatively affect the bilateral Ukrainian-Polish relations and cast doubt on the achievements of the political and scientific elites of the two countries, risking complicating and again exacerbating the international confrontations. The transformation of the historical memory of the Ukrainian and Polish societies, overcoming negative stereotypes and the formation of new and more positive stereotypes in the minds of people, living in the neighbouring countries are important components of the harmonious development of the inter-state relations between Ukraine and Poland. The significance of historical memory in the relations between Ukraine and the Republic of Poland is definitely increasing nowadays.

CONCLUSIONS

The centuries-long history of the Ukrainian-Polish relationships is saturated with many examples of mutual assistance, friendship and cooperation between the two peoples. Insufficiently explored pages of common history obstruct improvement and deepening of good-neighbourly relations between the two states and peoples. The Polish-Ukrainian confrontation in the 20s and 40s of the 20th century left a remarkable impact in the memory of both peoples. Ukrainian-Polish strife in the period of the Second World War was the culmination of the Ukrainian-Polish conflicts in the 20th century and it is particularly relevant to the events known as Volhynia tragedy of 1943-1944. They have caused significant social resonance, controversial assessments and interpretations in the national and Polish historiographies. Misinterpretations of certain historical facts still influence the socio-political life of both states and peoples, impeding the harmonious development of good-neighbourly relations between them. Some political forces, both in Poland and Ukraine, resort to various speculations, distortions, falsifications of events and facts, manipulate with the historical memory for the sake of short-term political benefits. Such tendencies have been

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

revealed in the course of preparation for “Volhynia Tragedy” anniversaries (60th, 70th and 75th anniversaries). The problem of the Ukrainian-Polish conflict has got a status of modern challenges that require thoughtful, balanced, reasoned responses, adequate in format and content. Moreover, some of them should be considered as the threats to the national security of the state. The factors that negatively affect the representation and well-balanced scientific interpretation of the events of the Second World War should be taken into account, including convergence of the approaches to their interpretation and evaluation by Ukrainian and Polish societies. Faithful, unbiased elucidation of the historical facts, revealing uncoordinated moments of the problem and disseminating them to the general public are one of the ways to facilitate positive transformation of historical memory concerning the inter-ethnic conflict between Poles and Ukrainians in Volhynia in 1943-1944. It is this way that seems to be the most effective and appropriate to smooth the confrontation between the Ukrainians and the Poles in their interpretation of the historical past.