

From the Volhynian Massacre to Operation Vistula

The Polish-Ukrainian Conflict 1943–1947

Grzegorz Motyka

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Fig. 1

A cross standing where Wydymer village once existed. The sign reads: "Here was the village of Wydymer. In 1943 – destroyed. The Poles have scattered across the whole world. 1943-2006".

Gordian Knot. The Ukrainian Problem in the Second Polish Republic

On the first of November 1918, the feeling that must have dominated among the Poles living in Lviv (Polish: Lwów) was astonishment. On that day, Ukrainian flags appeared on government offices and announcements circulated the city, indicating that the West Ukrainian People's Republic (WUPR) had been established with Lviv as its capital. For those Leopolitans who dreamed of a free Poland, the prospect of becoming West Ukrainian citizens was unacceptable. The fact that they had been overtaken in the process of creating a state by the Ukrainians, a national group that many believed did not exist but was “invented by the Austrians to spite the Poles”, aroused astonishment and increased desires to actively oppose these developments.

That same day, Polish underground groups spontaneously began launching counteroperations. The initially uncoordinated skirmishes quickly turned into fierce street battles. Among the ranks of Polish units were many youths under seventeen years of age who bravely and sacrificially took part in the fighting, giving rise to the legend of the Lwów Eaglets. On November 22, 1918 – due to resistance and arrival of reinforcements to the city – the Ukrainian army left Lviv. This was, however, only the beginning of the Polish-Ukrainian war, or rather the Polish-West Ukrainian war.

By March 1919, the Ukrainian Galician Army had attempted three maneuvers to regain Lviv, failing each time. In the following weeks, Polish Army units went on the offensive. Partial forces from General Józef Haller's army, which had arrived from France, were used for this purpose (though promises had been made to the Western powers that these units would not be deployed in Galicia). Polish pressure forced the bleeding WUPR units to retreat behind the Zbruch River, which was to form the southeastern border of a reborn Poland. The last units crossed over on July 16, 1919. The WUPR government led by Yevhen Petrushevych went first to Kamianets-Podilskyi, and then into exile. The incorporation of the WUPR into the Polish Republic was accepted by the leader of the Ukrainian People's Republic, Symon Petliura, who wanted thereby to save Ukrainian statehood on the Dnieper River. As is known, his hopes were dashed by the unfolding of the Polish-Soviet War and the Peace of Riga signed in March 1921.



Fig. 2 Ukrainian prisoners in Lviv, November 1918.

Despite military defeat, western Ukrainians did not lose hope for independence. The Poles had trouble getting the victorious powers, mainly France and England, to agree to Poland's incorporation of Eastern Galicia. In June 1919 Poland was granted only the right of temporary administration over the region, while serious consideration was given to the idea that its fate should be decided by inhabitants themselves in a plebiscite held under the auspices of the League of Nations. Though Lviv was a Polish city, Ukrainians were the majority in the remainder of Eastern Galicia. According to the 1931 census, Lviv was inhabited by 157,000 Poles, 99,000 Jews, and just under 50,000 Ukrainians, yet of the 4,729,515 people living in all of Eastern Galicia, 2,847,844 were Greek Catholics (almost entirely Ukrainians), 1,350,978 declared themselves to be Roman Catholics (Poles), and 490,459 professed Judaism (Jews). The results of any plebiscite would have therefore certainly been unfavourable for Poland.

The authorities of the Second Polish Republic, realizing this danger, began to strengthen Polish identity in the *Kresy* (Polish for "borderlands") immediately following the victory. Government offices were first to be Polonized, with all individuals refusing to swear an oath of allegiance to the Polish state being removed. Next, the Ukrainian chairs at the University of Lviv were abolished and a principle by which only those Polish citizens who had served in the Polish Army could study there was adopted. Finally, on December 5, 1920, all of Galicia was divided into four voivodeships (provinces): Kraków, Lwów,



Fig. 3 Defenders of Lwów. A photograph taken in November 1918.

Tarnopol, and Stanisławów. The borders of these provinces were shifted westward to change their demographic composition in favour of the Polish population. Thus, Lwów Voivodeship came to include powiats (counties) inhabited mainly by Poles: Rzeszów, Kolbuszowa, Krosno, and Tarnobrzeg. Eastern Galicia was officially named Eastern Lesser Poland (*Wschodnia Małopolska*). Moreover, in December 1920 the Legislative Sejm (Poland's parliament) passed a law that granted farmsteads in Volhynia on favourable financial terms to deserving soldiers and war invalids from central Poland, who were often settled in isolated settlements.

These actions provoked opposition from a large portion of the Ukrainian population. The Ukrainian political parties did not recognize Polish statehood, accepting only the exiled WUPR government as a legal authority. A similar position was taken, among others, by the leader of the Greek Catholic Church, Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytskyi. A call for passive resistance went out, namely in the form of boycotts of the census being organized by the Polish authorities, conscription into the army, and elections to the Sejm (November 1922). In October 1919 circles of underground Ukrainian education began forming, and in July 1921 an underground university (existing until 1925) opened its doors.

The transfer of farms to Polish colonists was particularly resented – local peasants commonly believed that the colonists appropriated land that should belong to them instead.

The Ukrainians by no means intended to limit themselves to passive resistance. Some Ukrainian officers and soldiers refused to lay down arms. In the summer of 1920, the underground Ukrainian Military Organization (UVO) was formed, headed by Colonel Yevhen Konovalets. The name of the organization rather inadvertently alluded to the Polish Military Organization (PMO); members of the UVO would later use Polish experiences in the struggle for independence as a touchstone. Initially, UVO subordinated itself to Petrushevych's government-in-exile in Vienna. Immediately after its creation, the organization began operations aimed at opposing the incorporation of Eastern Galicia and other disputed territories into the Republic of Poland. The first UVO terrorist act was carried out on November 25, 1921, in Lviv: an unsuccessful attempt on Marshal Józef Piłsudski's life (with the accompanying Lviv Voivode Kazimierz Grabowski being wounded). Sabotage actions carried out under Konovalets' direct leadership in the summer and autumn of 1922 were more serious. Grain stacks and farms of newly settled colonists and other Poles were set on fire. Bombs were planted at police and railroad stations, military warehouses, and on telegraph and telephone poles. Operations included the burning of military warehouses near Przemyśl and police buildings in Yavoriv, Gródek, Uhniv and Lubaczów. As part of a liquidation of "traitors", on October 15, 1922, in Kamianka Strumilova (modern-day Kamianka-Buzka) UVO members killed Sydir Tverdoblib, a Ukrainian poet and journalist, leader of the Agrarian Ukrainian Peasants' Party and candidate for the Polish Sejm.

This sabotage campaign, supported by communist circles, lasted several months. Three hundred acts of sabotage and diversion were likely committed. Police statistics list 223 acts of sabotage in 1922, including 17 attacks on officials (with five killed), 15 attacks on Ukrainian conciliators (nine deaths), 129 acts of arson and robberies, 27 sabotages of state facilities, and 35 telephone and telegraph wire cutting incidents.

All this, however, failed to alter the Ukrainians' position on the international stage. On March 14, 1923, the Council of Ambassadors, which had succeeded the Supreme War Council at the Paris Peace Conference, granted Eastern Galicia to Poland with the expectation that the local government of these territories would be given certain autonomous rights. The decision of the Council of Ambassadors seemed to close the issue of Poland's eastern border, at least in the perception of most western Ukrainians. This quickly eroded the authority of the Petrushevych government, with which even the UVO ceased cooperation in its determination to continue its desperate struggle.

A total of about five million Ukrainians found themselves in the reborn Polish state. They constituted 16 percent of the country's total population, though in some regions constituted an overwhelming majority. However, they were not a homogenous group. Great cultural disparities resulted primarily from religious differences, as well as different historical experiences of living in separate state organisms: Russia and Austria-Hungary. In terms of religion, some were Orthodox (Volhynia and Lublin regions), others Greek Catholic (Galicia). Over 90 percent of Ukrainians were rural dwellers, 3-6 percent made a living from industrial work, and only about one percent of the population was made up of intelligentsia. A significant part of this population was in favour of an independent Ukrainian state and was therefore averse to Poland. The degree of national awareness was considerably higher in Eastern Galicia than in Volhynia, but even there the local population was reluctant to accept the creation of Polish state structures. Peasants remembered with nostalgia the First World War, a time of so-called liberty, when after the evacuation of the tsarist administration and the flight of the landowners "neither Russians nor Poles remained. Whoever wanted to work did so ... anyone strong enough could repossess the land and sow his own grain [...] there were no forest rangers back then"¹. In light of this situation, it is not surprising that the Ukrainian issue was one of the most important problems that reborn Polish statehood had to struggle with.

The March Constitution of 1921 guaranteed equal rights to all Polish citizens, regardless of nationality and religion. In practice, however, the Poles were a privileged group. A good illustration of how constitutional rights corresponded to reality was the fact that never in the Second Republic did a non-Pole hold the post of minister, voivode, or even alderman (village headman). The full subordination of national minorities to Polish rule was upheld mainly by supporters of National Democracy, as well as the Christian Democrats and portions of the Polish Peasants' Party (PSL). All said groups pushed a policy of so-called national assimilation. As per its aims, Ukrainians and Byelorussians were to be gradually Polonized through administrative pressures. Proponents of national assimilation often denied the existence of a Ukrainian nation. In their view, living alongside Poles and Jews in the Kresy were simply Ruthenians with sympathies towards Poland. It was assumed all would be well in mutual relations were it not for a handful of rowdy intelligentsia members. The aims of Polonization were, for example, advanced by the introduction of utraquist schools by Minister Stanisław Grabski in 1924. Intended to be bilingual, they

1 Cit. per: Włodzimierz Mędrzecki, *Województwo wołyńskie 1921-1939. Elementy przemian cywilizacyjnych, społecznych i politycznych*, Wrocław 1988, p. 82.



Fig. 4 Workers and students of the state school in Basiv Kut in Volhynia, 1931. Four of the pupils are children of military colonists. The rest are Ukrainians.

proved to be a tool for restricting Ukrainian education. While 2558 Ukrainian public schools existed in the 1924/1925 school year, by 1937/1938 this fell to only 461.

The policy of national assimilation was strongly opposed by the Piłsudskites, the Polish Socialist Party, and the Alliance of Democrats. These environments supported so-called state assimilation. Supporters of this concept were in favour of guaranteeing national minorities full civil rights and cultural autonomy (some also proposed granting territorial autonomy to Galicia). In their view, this would lead in time to the binding of national minorities with the Polish state. One of the concept's leading supporters, Tadeusz Hołówko, mercilessly criticized the nationality policies of the Polish governments in power prior to May 1926. He wrote:

The eastern voivodeships and Eastern Galicia were handed over to an infirm and imbecilic bureaucracy that based its rule on the confiscation of publications, the closing of associations, and the suppression of the cultural, political, and social life of Ukrainians and Byelorussians. This thoughtless policy [...] has pushed Poland towards the abyss, as the million-strong masses [...] have begun to hate not only the foolish and brutish bureaucracy but also Polish statehood itself².

2 Tadeusz Hołówko, *Metody i drogi sanacji stosunków we wschodniej Galicji i województwach wschodnich*, in: *Nie jesteśmy ukraińofilami. Polska myśl polityczna wobec Ukraińców i Ukrainy*.



Fig. 5

Tadeusz Hołówko, member of parliament from 1930, supporter of Polish-Ukrainian reconciliation and so-called state assimilation.

The May Coup brought hopes for change. These ballooned further with changes within the state apparatus, as people known for their open attitude towards national minorities were promoted. In 1928, Henryk Józewski was appointed Voivode of Volhynia. This prominent member of the Piłsudski camp tried to make the region an enclave of Polish-Ukrainian reconciliation, therefore eliminating the influence of both the Polish and Ukrainian nationalists. He preferred, among other things, the establishment of Polish schools with obligatory Ukrainian language classes, which entailed limiting the development of Ukrainian education but at the same time forced Poles to learn the language of their neighbours.

The policies of the post-coup government, however, were full of inconsistencies. For example, they failed to meet one basic Polish-Ukrainian demand that a Ukrainian university be established in Lviv. Instead, after several years of negotiations, the Ukrainian Scientific Institute was established ... in Warsaw.

Antologia tekstów, Paweł Kowal, Jan Oldakowski, Monika Zuchniak (eds.), Wrocław 2002, p. 103.



Fig. 6
Henryk Józewski, voivode of Volhynia
1928-1938.

A separate issue was that the attitude of Ukrainian political parties did not give the Polish authorities much room for manoeuvre. The only milieu fully sympathetic to Poland was of the so-called Petliurites, supporters of the exiled government of the Ukrainian People's Republic who hoped for the restoration of Ukrainian statehood on the Dnieper and collaborated with Polish intelligence against the USSR. Several legal Ukrainian and Ruthenian political parties were active in the Second Polish Republic, representing a wide range of political opinions from leftists to fascists, often united by a common animosity towards Poland. The greatest support among the Ukrainian community was enjoyed by national democrat circles, coalesced under the Ukrainian National Democratic Alliance (Ukrayinske Natsionalno-Demokratichne Obyednannia – UNDO). It achieved good results in parliamentary elections in Eastern Galicia and thus gained a large parliamentary club-in the 1930s a representative of the UNDO held the post of deputy speaker of parliament. The UNDO tried to achieve the best possible conditions for Ukrainian social life through political means, constantly demanding cultural and territorial autonomy for Ukrainians living in Poland. Problematically, it would not be until the 1930s that it matured enough to recognize the Polish state as a permanent entity.

It was the UVO that strived to foster a spirit of resistance among Ukrainians. Its members carried out numerous expropriation actions in the 1920s, attacking postal ambulances, tax offices, etc. It also collaborated with German intelligence; in exchange for covert information, the UVO received money, weapons, and assistance in training its members. On October 19, 1926, Lviv school superintendent Stanisław Sobiński, accused of Polonizing Ukrainian education, was assassinated. Sobiński's murder-carried out by young UVO members Roman Shukhevych and Bohdan Pidhainyi-is a good illustration of the progressing radicalization of western Ukrainian youths' views.

The shock caused by the independence struggle's defeat sparked discussion in Ukrainian society about its causes and consequences. Blame was placed on political circles that had dissolved as a result of internal struggles they themselves had waged. Leading politicians were accused of ideological shortcomings in particular. It seemed that the democratic ideals espoused by the supporters of the WUPR in 1918-1919 had failed. As a result, nationalist ideology, fashionable in Europe at the time, became increasingly popular. The founder of Ukrainian nationalism is considered to be Mykola Mikhnovskyi, who advocated the creation of an independent Ukrainian state and formulated the slogan "Ukraine for Ukrainians" long before World War I. However, the leading spokesman for nationalism in the interwar period was to be Dmytro Dontsov, who propagated his ideas in numerous articles, books, and public speeches with tremendous impact on his audiences. In 1921, his work "Pidstavy nashoi polityky" (The Fundamentals of our Politics) was published in Vienna. In it, he blamed Ukrainian democrats and socialists for the defeat, as they, according to him, had squandered the entire nation's efforts. Over time, Dontsov's views, influenced in part by the fascist seizure of power in Italy, became increasingly radical. In 1926 he published the book "Natsionalizm", laying out his doctrine within. According to Dontsov, relations between nations were based on the principle of force: one was either master or servant. As such, everything required subordination to the strength and might of the Ukrainian nation, with foreign policy being conducted in the name of national egoism. Rejecting democracy, he advocated that the nation's leadership be taken over by an "active, courageous, power-hungry minority", characterized by fanatical love for its people and capable of any sacrifice.

Interestingly, Dontsov saw his main enemy in Russia, going so far as to view Ukraine's historical mission as its struggle against her. Poland, where he lived and worked through the interwar period, he treated as a potential anti-Russian ally; it was no accident that he supported the Piłsudski-Petliura alliance.

And yet, though little attention was paid to Dontsov's geopolitical visions, his views had an enormous impact on Ukrainian youth, among whom radical

groups opposing both pro-Polish and pro-Soviet stances began to form in the mid-1920s. These nationalist youth organizations engaged in self-education, the distribution of illegal press, breaking up celebrations of Polish national holidays in schools, and organizing celebrations of such Ukrainian holidays as November 1 (the anniversary of the founding of the WUPR). Later members included leading Banderites like Stepan Bandera (born 1909), Roman Shukhevych (born 1907), Vasyl Sydor (born 1910), Yaroslav Starukh (born 1910), or Miroslav Onyshkevych (born 1911).

All said individuals were well aware of the Ukrainian state's creation in 1918-1919 but too young to take part in the fight for independence (ranging between the ages of seven and eleven at the time). Being raised in a patriotic spirit, they grew up in rebellion against the older generation, accusing it of a lack of sacrifice and martyrdom in the fight for freedom. They easily took on Dontsov's views that emphasized the superiority of feelings over reason and emotionality over prudence. The nationalists believed that ardent and committed, self-sacrificial faith would lead to victory sooner or later, though conscious of their weaknesses often referred to themselves as the "knights of absurdity" or "fanatic apostles of a new idea".

In 1929, UVO activists and other Ukrainian nationalist groups established the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) in Vienna. The OUN was to aim at "regaining, building, defending, and expanding an independent, united Ukrainian nation-state" (Ukrayinska Samostiyna Soborna Derzhava – the USSD), which was to include all "Ukrainian ethnographic lands", i.e. those which, according to the Nationalists, were inhabited by Ukrainians in the medieval period!

The OUN was to wage a ruthless struggle against all the "partitioners", disregarding its losses and using all means available. The "complete removal of all invaders (zaimantsi)" from Ukrainian lands was to take place through a national revolution, with the OUN steering "permanent revolution" from its outset. The idea was to constantly prepare the nation for the national revolution through propaganda, sabotage, and acts of terror. Resultantly, the OUN, fearing assimilation processes, considered any Polish or Ukrainian activists attempting to compromise on national issues particularly dangerous. Paradoxically, the Ukrainian nationalists' allies thus became those Polish politicians who attempted to solve the nationality issues of the Second Polish Republic by force.

The radical course of the OUN was well reflected in the "decatalogue of the nationalist" written by Stepan Lenkavskyi. Its first commandment stated: "You will win the Ukrainian state or die fighting for it"; its seventh: "You will not hesitate to perform the most dangerous deeds [in the original version – to

commit the greatest crime – G.M.] when the good of the cause requires it”; and its eighth: “With hatred and ruthless struggle [and deception] will you take on the enemy of Your Nation”³. Mykhailo Kolodzinskyi, an OUN associate, analyzing the Polish uprising of 1863 stated: “We saw from the example of the Polish insurgents that people who wanted freedom for their nation did not shrink from using any means to achieve it. [...] It takes blood, let’s give a sea of blood; it takes terror, let’s make it hellish; it takes material goods, let’s leave nothing for ourselves. With a free Ukrainian state as our goal, let’s go towards it by any means and any route. Let’s not be ashamed of murder, looting, and arson. There are no ethics in battle”⁴.

Even before 1939, the OUN program outlined that all landed estates and colonist farms would be parcelled out to Ukrainian peasants without compensation. Colonists settled after 1918 were to be deported from the future Ukrainian state immediately after independence. It stated: “The right to own land on private property is vested in the members of the Ukrainian nation and all labouring farmers of other nationalities who positively relate to the liberation struggle of the Ukrainian people. Foreigners -zaidy- will not be allowed to acquire land in private ownership”⁵. Such declarations can be found in the writings of leading OUN activists Mykola Stsiborskyi and Dmytro Myron. Additionally, Stsiborskyi assumed that at the outbreak of an uprising the “peasants will settle their scores with those landowners that acted as agents of the Polish occupation, as well as with the military and civilian colonists”. This meant that already by the 1930s the OUN was planning to provoke the peasants to bloody action against Polish landowners and colonists⁶. The “showdown” against a portion of the Poles was to be thereby hidden under the guise of popular lynch trials.

Foreshadowing of retaliation and even the “showdown” can be found in many OUN songs. It seems that what concerned a portion of the Polish population (mainly colonists and landowners) in the leadership’s program covered the majority of the Polish Kresy community in the propaganda practiced by the organization’s rank-and-file members. In the OUN marching song “We were born of the Blood of the Nation” we read:

3 Cit. per: Петро Мірчук, *Напис історії ОУН 1920-1939*, Munchen-London-New York 1968, pp. 126-127.

4 Cit. per: Roman Wysocki, *Organizacja Ukraińskich Nacjonalistów w Polsce w latach 1929-1939*, Lublin 2003, p. 185.

5 Максим Орлик (Дмитро Мирон), *Ідея і Чин України. Нарис ідеологічно-політичних основ українського націоналізму*, Київ 2001, pp. 195-196.

6 Микола Сціборський, *ОУН і селянство*, Prague 1933, p. 32.

We were born of the blood of the nation,
Lullabied by prison grimness,
Tempered by battles for freedom
and by hatred towards shame and yoke.

Death, death, death to the Lakhs,
Death to accursed Muscovite-Jewish communism,
The OUN leads us into bloody combat.

We are all loyal sons of Ukraine,
Fearsome avengers of our brothers.
We only await the [right] moment,
We await the order: Forward! Against the executioners!⁷



Fig. 7 Children during agricultural training in Toporowce/Toporivtsi (Stanisławów Voivodeship). The sign reads in Polish and Ukrainian: "Toporowce. Agricultural training of the rural youth".

Another song telling the story of OUN members sentenced to death and executed went:

In the final moment they will rise from the grave,
Without trial they will hang the executioners,
The same fate awaits each executioner,
The Lakh and the dog – onto the same gallows!⁸

⁷ Cit. per: Літопис УПА, v. 25, Toronto-Lviv 1996/1997, p. 4.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 75.

Meanwhile, a chant spread by OUN sympathizers among school youth went:

Pierogies up above,
Grits down below,
Run away, Poles -
Ukraine is ours⁹.

Communist circles had a similar view of Polish presence in the Kresy to that of the OUN. One communist goal was to unify Volhynia and Eastern Galicia with the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. No secret was made of the fact that they aimed to weaken the Second Polish Republic as a whole. In the 1920s, at the Third Congress of the Communist Party of Poland, Dmytro Manuilskyi, a representative of the Communist International (Comintern), urged communists to try to “loosen the national seams of the contemporary Polish state, preventing it from grounding and stabilizing itself”¹⁰. Communist propaganda encouraged the local population to crack down on the “Polish masters”. Exemplary is the feature film “Karmeluk”, filmed in the USSR in 1938, in which the main character, in his death throes, still calls for “tearing Poles out by the roots” from Ukrainian lands. And though theoretically such productions underlined the class character of the intended revolution, even those Poles pictured going over to the side of the insurgents, in the end, are deemed as traitors. The communists formed strictly conspiratorial militias that were to serve as a core for future partisan units. Some remained inactive for years, waiting to be activated only at the outbreak of a war between the USSR and Poland.

In mid-1930, the OUN made its existence evident by organizing its second sabotage action, an event also considered a partial uprising. Most of the sabotage missions took place between July 12 and September 24 of 1930, though individual incidents also occurred later. A total of 199 acts of diversion were committed. Most amounted to the burning of crops and farm buildings, with occasional telephone wires being cut. Ukrainian communities began joining the operation spontaneously. In September the underground leadership terminated the campaign.

This second sabotage operation caused Piłsudski to order a restoration of peace by force, though in such a way as to avoid bloodshed. The pacification action's supporter Władysław Pobóg-Malinowski described it as follows:

Based on [...] Piłsudski's order, the “pacification” of Lesser Poland lasted 10 weeks, from 16 September to 30 November 1930. It started with the arrest of 30 former

9 Євстахій Добровольський, *Крутими стежками. Спогади та роздуми*, Ternopil 1999, p. 9.

10 Cit. per: Henryk Cimek, *Komuniści, Polska, Stalin 1918-1939*, Białystok 1990, p. 47.

Ukrainian deputies to the Sejm and about 100 of the most active and harmful organizers; the youth organization “Plast”, controlled entirely by terrorists, was dissolved, for the same reason three Ukrainian secondary schools were also closed-in Rohatyn, Drohobych, and Ternopil; “police repressions” were limited to searches for weapons or the tendrils of underground organizations—mostly in reading rooms and cooperative stores [...] in cases of haughty resistance, “pesky inspections” were carried out (e.g. salt was poured into sugar containers in shops or flour was “accidentally” doused with kerosene, actions that in truth were imitations of methods used by the Ukrainians); beatings – with police rubber truncheons – took place only in instances of active resistance. The army came only to those locations where the Ukrainians continued their methods of terror after September 16 [...] at the request of a voivode or district governor the military authorities usually sent cavalry squadrons to the troubled region; stationing with obligation for the local village to provide furs, hay, and clover lasted from a few days to a few weeks and was usually combined with repeated and long “bothersome” police inspections. [...] not a single shot was fired [...] the only punishment rather was beating; there was not a single death, nor was a single Ukrainian homestead burned¹¹.

Contrary to what Pobóg-Malinowski wrote, possibly several or, according to other sources, even upwards of thirty people died as a result of beatings. Also, the effects of the Polish action primarily affected the innocent. Zeneida, née Zamoyska, described the events as such:

The Polish army brutally pacified Ukrainian villages. The infamous “tulips” were commonplace. Ukrainian girls would be hanged upside down by their legs with their dangling dresses resembling tulips. Strolls to the Greek Catholic church ceased being a pleasure¹².

The pacification carried out by the Polish authorities caused an international scandal and damaged Poland’s good name. The materials and photographs smuggled to the West made it possible to petition the League of Nations and launch an anti-Polish press campaign. The worst thing, however, was that the Polish actions contributed to a relapse of declining anti-Polish sentiment and increased sympathy towards the nationalists. In the face of police brutality, the methods adopted by the nationalists seemed to many Ukrainians the only possible course of action.

In 1933 Stepan Bandera became head of the OUN network in Poland. He was reportedly very collegial and friendly towards people who thought like him but was also known for his uncompromising stance. “His attitude towards

11 Władysław Pobóg-Malinowski, *Najnowsza historia polityczna Polski*, v. 2, 1914-1939, Gdańsk 1990, pp. 726-727.

12 Cit. per: Andrzej Leon Sowa, *Stosunki polsko-ukraińskie 1939-1947*, Kraków 1998, p. 52.

people he considered devoid of character, non-ideological, or just ‘the man in the street’ was completely different,” recalled Hryhor Melnyk, his schoolmate and OUN colleague. Towards them he showed contempt: “Dull-witted masses! Neither literate nor well-read ...”¹³. To fellow students who declared their disregard for politics he refused his hand. Bandera even scolded Melnyk for helping someone he considered non-ideological during a chemistry exam.

Bandera paid special attention to the OUN’s combat section. At its head was Roman “Dzvin” Shukhevych (popularly also known as “Shukh”), who was conspiratorial even by OUN standards. Bandera advocated individual terror against representatives of the Polish government and Ukrainians considered “collaborators”. Even before he became the OUN’s national providnyk (chairman) in Poland, young nationalists killed Member of Parliament Tadeusz Hołówko, a proponent of Polish-Ukrainian conciliation, on August 29, 1931, in Truskavets. Hołówko’s death sent shockwaves and was unanimously condemned by both ethnic communities. However, the assassination was perfectly in line with the OUN’s practice of “permanent revolution”. As one OUN member put it: “He was disarming us ideologically. At least with the National Democrats the situation was clear: us here, them over there. Hołówko blurred the dividing lines”¹⁴.

Fig. 8

Burial ceremony transferring the coffin with Tadeusz Holowka's body from the house of mourning to the train. Procession in the streets of Truskawiec, August 1931.



In 1934 Bandera’s nationalists were responsible for the equally notorious assassinations of Ukrainian high school headmaster Ivan Babiý and Minister of the Interior Bronisław Pieracki. They did not, however, succeed in assassinating Henryk Józewski, Volhynia’s voivode. The assassination of Minister Pieracki forced Polish police to carry out a vigorous investigation, which resulted in mass arrests. About eight hundred members of the OUN were rounded up.

13 Григор Мельник, *Степан Бандера (Причинки до характеристики особи)*, in: Володимир Макар, *Спомини та роздуми*, v. 3, Toronto-Kyiv 2001, p. 118.

14 Grzegorz Górny, *Wyznania pułkownika Kuka*, “Tygodnik Powszechny”, 29 May 1994.



Fig. 9 Minister of the Interior Bronisław Pieracki (right) in Krynica, 1932.

The Polish side managed to capture its entire leadership, headed by Bandera and Shukhevych. Most received long prison sentences. Bandera himself was sentenced to death in two trials, one in Warsaw and another in Lviv, a sentence later changed to life imprisonment. During his trial, he refused to testify in Polish, while his uncompromising attitude conferred him with great authority and strengthened his position as leader of the young nationalists.

The arrests conducted by Polish authorities shook the organization. Besides, it turned out that one of the top senior members of the OUN, Roman Baranovskyi, was a police collaborator, which undermined the trust between the underground's members. No less painful for the Ukrainians was the fact that Poland signed non-aggression pacts with the USSR and Germany, which seemed to put off the possibility of a new war in the future. All this forced the remaining activists to go deeper underground and forego their terrorist activities.

After Piłsudski's death, the ruling elites, driven by state security motives, began to view the national assimilation project more favourably, partly adopting National Democracy's program. Although the possibility of complete Polonization of minorities was rejected, it was believed that attracting a portion of Kresy inhabitants to Polishness was possible. In 1938 a program to "strengthen Polishness" began being implemented, under which 138 "unnecessary" Orthodox churches and chapels in the Lublin region were destroyed. This was done in front of gathered Orthodox believers, with any resistance being suppressed by force. In the same year, units of the Border Protection Corps "converted" several thousand Orthodox believers in Volhynia to Catholicism through various coercive means. Voivode Józewski's aloofness towards these missionary "successes" became the reason behind his transfer to Łódź. After Józewski's departure, to quote a work by American historian Timothy Snyder, "the Polish nationalists implemented enough of their program between 1938 and 1939 to convince fence-straddling Ukrainians that foreign occupation would certainly be preferable to Polish rule"¹⁵.

In April 1939 a second, this time around "minor" pacification was carried out. Even though the OUN network had been nearly paralyzed, Polish actions shortly before the war led to such a strain in mutual relations that in some Ukrainian villages, policemen were afraid to appear alone. Summing up the interwar period, one must admit that it did not offer many positive experiences

15 Timothy Snyder, *Sketches from a Secret War. A Polish Artist's Mission to Liberate Soviet Ukraine*, New York-London 2005, p. 191.

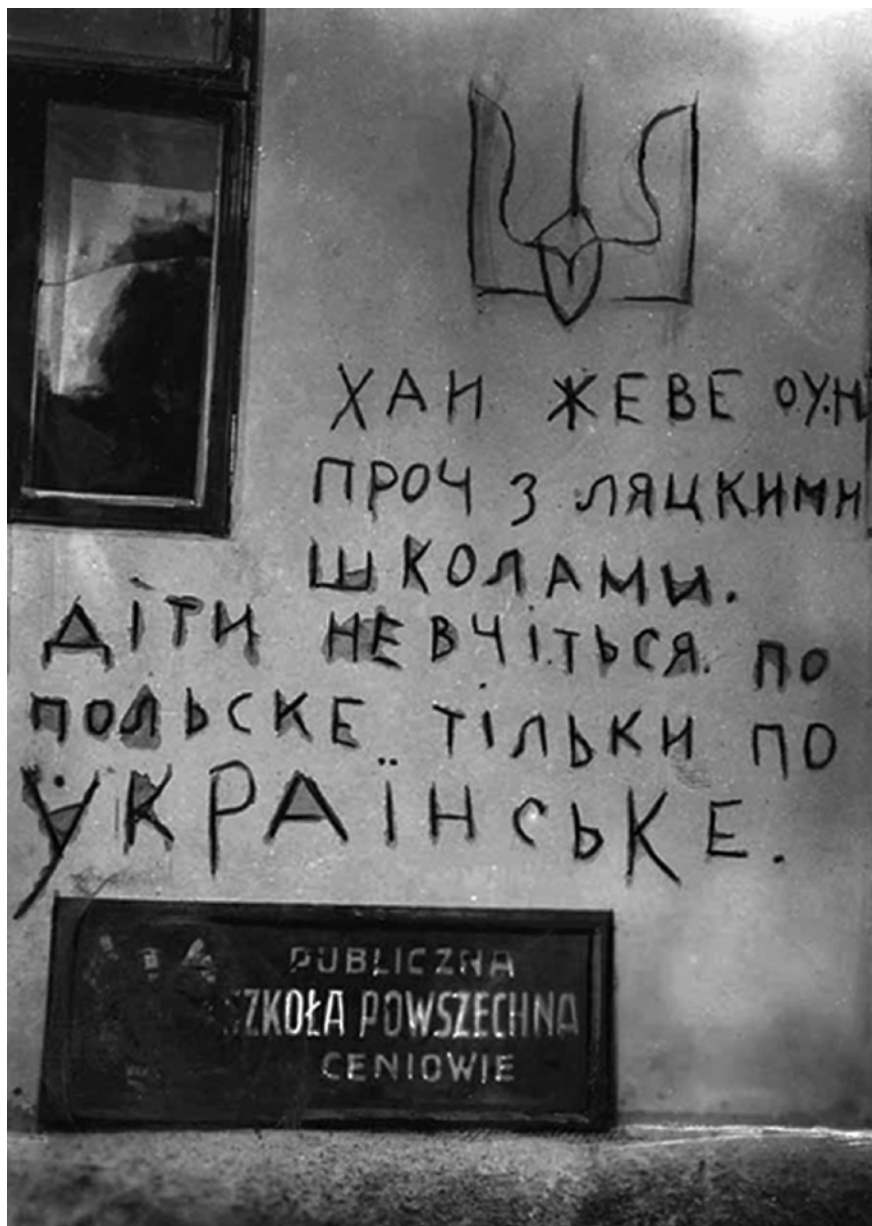


Fig. 10

Graffiti on a school wall in Ceniów/Tseniv (Tarnopol Voivodeship) made by the OUN calling on pupils to study in Ukrainian rather than Polish. Visible is a sign with the school's name and a rubbed-off Polish coat of arms, 1933.

to Ukrainians. Compared to the times under Habsburg rule, the social and cultural living conditions of Ukrainians had clearly deteriorated, and the Ukrainian intelligentsia practically lacked any career prospects – the failure to fulfill the promises of establishing self-government in Galicia and a Ukrainian university meant that the Ukrainians viewed all Polish assurances with great distrust. Moreover, realizing the popularity of National Democracy's calls for a hard line against the Ukrainian population, the fate of their national community was a serious worry. There was widespread conviction that only winning a separate state would prevent its dissolution. From this vantage point, only a few logical steps had to be made to support the radical ideas of the nationalists.

Poles, on the other hand, failed to see the injustices suffered by Ukrainians. Contrarily, they themselves, especially those living amid the "Ukrainian sea", often felt under threat. And this despite often positive, even friendly relations with their neighbours and numerous mixed marriages (according to data from 1927 in the south-eastern provinces the number of such unions amounted to 8.7 percent of the total number). In Poles' minds, these good neighbours were often simply Ruthenians, while a Ukrainian was considered someone who did not accept Polish dominance. The consistently anti-state stance of most Ukrainian parties and the terrorist activities of the OUN, alongside its ties to Germany, meant that Poles quite commonly perceived nationally conscious Ukrainians as Poland's enemies. For this reason, the Polish community living in the Kresy was strongly opposed to any concessions to the Ukrainian minority, considering such acts a betrayal of the national interest.

It is thus unsurprising that the new course of state policy caused enthusiasm among National Democracy politicians. The publication "Warszawski Dziennik Narodowy" of April 20, 1939, wrote with triumph:

The unyielding attitude of Polish nationalism [...] has caused that, if not all, then the vast majority of Poles has adopted the national program as its own and sets off to fight under the slogan: in Eastern Lesser Poland we have nothing to give, yet much to regain and take¹⁶.

This was accompanied by attempts to completely discredit supporters of state assimilation. In "Kurier Wołyński" of May 9, 1938, following Henryk Józewski's dismissal, a text titled "Koniec epoki Józewińskiej" (The End of the Józewski Era) was published:

16 Cit. per: Magdalena Nowak, *Narodowcy i Ukraińcy. Narodowa Demokracja wobec mniejszości ukraińskiej w Polsce 1922-1939*, Gdańsk 2007, p. 232.



Fig. 11 The south-eastern lands of the Second Polish Republic. Administrative boundaries.

The April decisions of Poland's highest state authorities, which resulted in a change in appointment of Volhynia's voivode, have empowered the Poles of Volhynia to maintain confidence that their decades-long martyrdom has finally come to an end¹⁷.

Considering that the next ten years following Józewski's dismissal brought unimaginable suffering to Volhynian Poles, it is hard not to regard these words as an appalling example of a lack of imagination and national arrogance. The national activists so critical of the Volhynian experiment were unable to understand that if anything could have prevented or at least limited the influence of the nationalists in Ukrainian society during the interwar period, and thus determine the extent of the coming tragedy, it was the work of individuals the likes of Józewski and Hołówko.

17 Cit. per: Włodzimierz Mędrzecki, *Inteligencja polska na Wołyniu w okresie międzywojennym*, Warsaw 2005, p. 261.

September 1939

The tension in international relations in the summer of 1939 called for serious consideration of the possibility of war. The signing of a German-Soviet Pact on August 23, 1939, although its details were unknown, undoubtedly encouraged Ukrainian circles to exercise restraint in the event of German aggression, given the expectation that the Soviets would never consent to the reactivation of Western Ukrainian statehood.

For this reason, among others, the UNDO issued the following declaration on August 24, 1939:

Tensions in current international relations have reached their peak. [...] At present, we do not see any outside power coming to resolve the Ukrainian question. For these reasons, the propaganda telling us to wait for external help is inconsistent with the Ukrainian national *raison d'état*. [...] We condemn the various attempts to draw our society into any kind of diversionary action as the work of foreign agents, and we warn Ukrainian society, especially our youth, against them. [...] Without taking our eyes off the national-political aspirations of the Ukrainian people to become a fully equal and rightful member of the circle of European nations, and without giving up the political struggle for full rights of the Ukrainian people in Poland, the National Committee states that we are unfortunately entering this historical moment for the Ukrainian and Polish peoples on an unbalanced political scale. [...] The National Committee believes that historical necessity will lead, in the mutual interest of both nations, to an equalization of the political differences between them¹.

A declaration of similar content was also made by Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytskyi, and again after the outbreak of war by the UNDO via its vice-chairman, deputy speaker of parliament Vasyl Mudryi, as well as Volhynian Ukrainians' representative Stepan Skrypnyk. Significantly, Ukrainians did not boycott the Polish Army's mobilization call. Among the one million Polish soldiers were about 110,000 Ukrainians. There is no doubt that during the Polish campaign of 1939 they fulfilled their duties well, fighting at Mokra, Bzura, and in Pomerania, among other places. Seven to eight thousand Ukrainians died in Polish uniform and probably twice as many were wounded.

Before the war, Polish authorities were unsure how national minorities would react to its outbreak. It was feared, especially with regards to radical

1 The Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum (Sikorski Institute), A 9V/8a.

Ukrainian groups, that they would take advantage of war-time turmoil to carry out sabotage and diversionary actions. To prevent hostile protests, the Polish authorities arrested several thousand Ukrainian activists overnight between September 1-2, 1939, as part of a so-called immobilization of anti-state elements. However, after only a few days prisoners were released due to the unfavourable situation on the front. The same was done with those who had been earlier sentenced on political charges, Stepan Bandera being freed from prison in this manner.

In truth, Polish fears were not unfounded. As the Germans prepared their plans to attack Poland in 1939, they considered the possibility of triggering an uprising in Eastern Galicia with the help of the OUN and using it as a pretext for the war. For this reason, the Abwehr renewed its contacts with Ukrainian nationalists, which had been suspended in 1934 (following the Polish-German non-aggression pact). The OUN's preparations went ahead despite the death of its leader, Yevhen Konovalts, who was killed in 1938 in Rotterdam in an assassination organized by the Soviet secret service. His place was quickly taken by Colonel Andriy Melnyk, though a company of young radicals believed that the position should be held by still-imprisoned Bandera. Although the conflict quickly petered out due to war preparations, it initiated a split into an "old" and "young" faction.

To carry out subversive actions in Poland, the Germans formed a special Ukrainian legion that was to be transported to Galicia via Slovakia or by air. It was assumed that its forces would be reinforced by OUN partisan groups as well as by Polish Army deserters of Ukrainian nationality. The legion consisted of about six hundred soldiers grouped into two *kurins* (battalions). It was commanded by Colonel Roman Sushko. The Abwehr estimated that in September 1939 it had about four thousand armed Ukrainian fighters on the territory of Eastern Galicia ready to take up arms. After the outbreak of the war, they were to "cleanse" the Stanisławów Voivodeship of Polish troops and police and to capture the Dniester, Zolishchyky, Halych, Mykolaiv, and Sambir line, thereby cutting the Sambir-Sanok-Nowy Sącz railway connection.

Signing a pact with the USSR changed the Germans' position on Ukrainian independence aspirations. While they had intended to use the Ukrainian nationalists on a large scale before August 23, they then decided to do so only as a last resort, to avoid irritating their new ally. The Soviets, however, were reluctant to enter the war, which caused the question of inciting a Ukrainian uprising to resurface. On September 12, 1939, a meeting was held in Jełowa, Silesia, to discuss this possibility. Field Marshal Keitel presented three options for further development of the situation: division of the Polish territories between the Third Reich and the USSR; creation of a limited Polish state with which



Fig. 12 Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary from Lviv Provincial House digging ditches on the Mościcki ramparts, August 1939.

a peace treaty would be signed; and finally the transfer of the Vilnius region to Lithuania and creation of a western Ukrainian state in Eastern Galicia and Volhynia. As Ryszard Torzecki wrote, "The Abwehr was to inspire the slaughter of Jews and Poles, then to be carried out by the OUN and encouraged, local populace. This itself was Hitler's idea, known as *Flurbereinigung* (clearing an area of undesirable elements)"². Continued Soviet inaction resulted in conditional approval to begin the rebellion a few days later. On September 15 a meeting took place between Admiral Wilhelm Canaris and Andriy Melnyk, after which the OUN head proceeded to put together the future Ukrainian government. On September 17 however, the Soviet offensive began.

Meanwhile, on September 12, 1939, German troops reached Lviv. Although the attempt to capture the city in stride was unsuccessful, local OUN militias took the Wehrmacht's arrival as a call for anti-Polish action. During the night of September 12, Ukrainian rebels captured Stryi. Over the next few days, uprisings took place in all districts of mixed ethnic composition. Clashes were reported, among others, near Mykolaiv and Zhydachiv, where two bridges over the Dniester were captured—a road bridge in Demyanka and a railway bridge in

2 Ryszard Torzecki, *Kwestia ukraińska w polityce III Rzeszy 1933-1945*, Warsaw 1972, p. 189.

Rozvadiv. A police station was seized in Mykolaiv, while OUN members and “patriotic youth” took over the town and disarmed the Polish forces passing through it. Ukrainian partisan units appeared in the field, attacking and disarming Polish troops. In Drohobycz District alone five were active.

The Polish Army and state police, however, launched a decisive counter-attack, bringing the situation under control quite quickly. Most diversionary operations were suppressed (with utmost severity, we might add), though some fighting did take place. Second Lieutenant Karol Witold Daszkiewicz would recall:

On September 15 [...] I received orders to go with 50 of my best soldiers to the village of Nadiatycze (Ukr. Naditychi), where 2 companies of police had been taking the village since morning. When I arrived, the village had already been captured, with police losses at 7 dead and 20 seriously wounded. The village was burned down. The apprehended pop [Greek Catholic priest – G.M.] and school-teacher were shot. On September 16 [...] a subsequent attack on Mikołajów, which was taken without a shot being fired. The Ukrainians fled into the forests stretching all the way to Lwów³.

The greatest wave of diversion spread, this time across the entire Kresy, on September 17, 1939. As the Red Army crossed the Polish border, Soviet sabotage networks sprang into action. The communist-led operations, in addition to having immediate military objectives, were primarily intended to demonstrate the “longing” of the Ukrainian, Belarusian, and Jewish inhabitants of the Kresy to be incorporated into the borders of the “global proletariat homeland”. Order No. 005 of the Belorussian Front’s War Council reads:

Red Army Comrades [...] A revolutionary movement is developing in Western Ukraine and Belarus. Revolts and uprisings of the Belorussian and Ukrainian peasantry in Poland have begun. The Polish working and peasant classes are joining forces to wring the necks of their bloody oppressors⁴.

Groups formed by the communists tried to seize control in individual towns and ceremoniously welcome the entering Soviets through triumphal arches. This was accompanied by attacks on police stations, manors, and smaller groups of soldiers. Refugees from central Poland were also frequently attacked and mainly robbed, though killings did occur as well. Landowners were mercilessly murdered. Often, the saboteurs felt so confident that they began waging

3 Sikorski Institute, B I/107 A, account of 2LT Karol Witold Daszkiewicz.

4 Cit. per: Михаил Мельтюхов, *17 сентября 1939. Советско-польские конфликты 1918-1939*, Москва 2009, p. 356.

a war of attrition against the retreating Polish Army and police units. The communists were quickly joined by people from the margins of society, who, taking advantage of this period of “liberty”, decided to easily enrich themselves.

Many instances of diversion were noted in Polesie Voivodeship, both in its Belarusian and Ukrainian parts. A similar situation arose in Volhynia. In both provinces, the nationalists joined in anti-Polish operations alongside the communists. As recalled by OUN organizer Semen “Klishch” Levytskyi, “after the outbreak of war in September 1939 we began disarming Poles in Polesie wherever we could. Among other things, there was a plan to collaborate ‘tactically’ with the communists to capture the county town of Dorohychyn (Pol. Drohiczyn) [...] though after giving it some thought this was abandoned, as we deemed it unrealistic”⁵.

The retreating Polish units often had to fight fierce battles against saboteurs. This is how General Wilhelm Orlik-Rückemann saw the situation at the time:

Pro-Bolshevik sentiments are growing in the area [...] in the town of Bereźno [...] I came across a welcoming arch set up by the populace to welcome the Bolsheviks. I ordered the KOP military police [...] to conduct swift investigations and punish those guilty. A soviet has been formed in Ratno [...] and an armed communist militia has been organized. [...] The advance guard [...] before entering the road to Kowel came under carbine and LMG fire, only after driving off bands of saboteurs did they enter the town. The commander of the advance guard, Major Wojciechowski [...] efficiently and energetically liquidated this band⁶.

News of the Soviet attack was followed by other OUN revolts in Eastern Galicia. In Tarnopol Voivodeship, Ukrainian operations reached peak intensity in Brzeżany and Podhajce counties, where the revolt was led by OUN regional providnyk Hryhoriy Goliash “Bey”. Slaughters of entire Polish colonies were reported in the area. The greatest number of victims came from Koniuchy and Potutorów villages, where about one hundred people were killed, and from Sławentyń, where eighty-five Poles were murdered. Additionally, in the colony of Jakubowce fifty-seven homesteads were burned and over twenty people murdered. These crimes may be regarded as a prelude to the bloody ethnic cleansing in Volhynia, which would take place several years later.

The Soviets turned a blind eye to the crimes committed by the local population against the Poles, seeing them as a manifestation of “the people’s justice”, at the same time making sure that victims were mainly members of the upper

5 Семен Левицький “Кліщ”, *Бойові дії ОУН у Бережанщині і на Поліссі*, in: Володимир Макар, *Спомини та роздуми*, в. 3, Торонто–Київ 2001, p. 354.

6 Sikorski Institute, B I 96 A.



Fig. 13 Red Army infantry units enter Poland, September 17, 1939.

classes. This is what Lev Mekhlis, chief of the Red Army's Political Board, wrote on the topic on September 22, 1939:

Hostility between Ukrainians and Poles is growing, at the moment the Ukrainians have become active and are terrorizing Polish peasants in many locations. [...] An order has been issued to broadly develop [political – G.M.] activities against the national enmity between Ukrainian and Polish working people, and to direct it in unified force against the landowners⁷.

One must not forget, however, that Polish troops responded ruthlessly to diversions and murders wherever possible. Villages from which shots were fired were burned. Men seized with guns (and sometimes even without) were shot on the spot. This is made clear by Polish accounts. Second Lieutenant Stanisław Krocze from 3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment 3/21 pp recalled:

The population of Polesie is hostile towards us. [...] The shooting goes on every night. The soldiers are afraid to advance in the rear guard, as the Poleshuks fire at the rear units. A special company composed of sailors terminates the villages. Frequent fires mark the army's passing⁸.

Naval Captain Witold Zajączkowski, recalling the march of Independent Operational Group Polesie, stated: "every village from which our troops were fired upon was, as a rule, burned, and those caught with guns in hand were shot"⁹.

It is worth mentioning that Sushko's Ukrainian Legion did not participate in diversionary operations. On September 4, 1939, this unit set out from Prešov towards the Polish border. It was divided into small groups and assigned to different units of the German army, some of them reaching the vicinity of Stryi and Lviv. After the USSR invaded Poland, its troops were withdrawn westward to Sanok and demobilized in the fall of 1939. According to the OUN, almost eight thousand people took part in diversionary operations it conducted between August 29 and September 23, 1939. The diversions were to encompass 183 towns. Members of the OUN captured no less than 23 heavy and 80 light machine guns, 3757 rifles, and 3445 pistols. They took 3610 Poles prisoner and killed 796. They burned at least four Polish villages and destroyed one bridge. Their own losses amounted to 160 killed and 53 wounded.

⁷ Михаил Мельтюхов, *17 сентября...*, p. 548.

⁸ Sikorski Institute, B I 96 F.

⁹ Sikorski Institute, B I 97/D, account of Witold Zajączkowski.

The full list of Polish victims was certainly much longer. According to estimates, several thousand people died as a result of various attacks in the Kresy – probably about two thousand perished in Eastern Galicia and about a thousand in Volhynia. The number of murdered refugees from central Poland is particularly difficult to determine. Similarly, however, the number of Ukrainians killed in Polish pacifications is unknown; in this case, we can probably speak of several hundreds of victims.

When evaluating the events of September 1939, it is worth remembering the words of Andrzej Leon Sowa:

While about 200,000 Ukrainians and Belarusians loyally fought in the ranks, a couple thousand or so representatives of these nationalities may have been involved in anti-Polish operations at most. The above data should make historians tread cautiously when attempting to generalize, which comes so easily while being so difficult to balance, especially when analyzing a matter as delicate as human attitudes¹⁰.

10 Andrzej Leon Sowa, *Stosunki ...*, p. 104.

From Poland's Downfall to the Rule of Yaroslav Stetsko (1939-1941)

3.1 Policy of the Occupiers

With the outbreak of World War II, Poles and Ukrainians found themselves in differing geopolitical situations. Poland had been a member of the Allied camp from the outset and regarded the Germans as her main foe. The Soviets were first an enemy (1939-1941), then a difficult ally (1941-1943), and lastly “our allies’ ally” (from 1943). Meanwhile, for the Ukrainian nationalists, the Soviet Union became the number one nemesis after the fall of Poland. Germany appeared to be the only country interested in the creation of an independent Ukraine. This put Poles and Ukrainians in an *a priori* position of conflict. The collaboration of many Ukrainians with the Germans, though undoubtedly mainly motivated by the self-interest of their own people, was perceived as an act of hostility. The mutual resentment was fueled by the undisguised satisfaction with which many Ukrainians accepted Poland’s defeat. One OUN member recalled: “And a strange thing happened, for not two weeks had passed when the state called Poland, which had shouted at the top of its lungs – ‘we will not give in’ – disappeared. This prideful, conceited, aristocratic state disappeared from the political map”¹.

From the beginning, the Germans deftly strived to amplify Ukrainian hopes. Although Nazi plans for the fate of the Ukrainians were similar to those for the Poles (deprived of their leadership, partially massacred and resettled, they were to become a reservoir of cheap labour), repressions up to the outbreak of the German-Soviet war were directed primarily at Poles. To facilitate their control over the Polish community, the Germans pursued a policy of emphasizing all ethnic distinctions. One element of this policy was to support the Ukrainians, of whom about 550,000 lived under German occupation, mostly in the Lublin and Subcarpathian regions. The Ukrainians were permitted higher nutrition standards, were allowed to own radios (something Poles were punished by death for), were allowed to develop their own primary and secondary schools, and study at German universities in Berlin and Vienna. In Chełm and

1 Євстахій Добровольський, *Крутими...*, p. 9.

its hinterlands, the Orthodox Church received about twenty churches that it had lost to the Catholic Church after 1918.

The Germans dissolved all political parties, allowing only charitable organizations separately representing Poles, Jews, and Ukrainians to exist. In May 1940, the Ukrainian Central Committee (UTsK) was established, with local Ukrainian Relief Committees (UDK) reporting to it. The UTsK was supposed to only serve as a social welfare agency but in fact was an informal representative of Ukrainians before the authorities of the General Government (GG). It was headed by Volodymyr Kubyovych, who made no secret of his desire to bring about the Ukrainization of "ethnographically Ukrainian lands". To this end, he tried to procure for Ukrainians all local government positions not reserved for Germans (aldermen, mayors, etc.) and to develop Ukrainian educational and cultural life. He repeatedly proposed that the Germans separate the Ukrainians from the Poles in the GG by population resettlements.

On December 17, 1939, Hans Frank created by decree the Ukrainian Auxiliary Police, subordinate to the SS and police force. Until 1941 the number of its members did not exceed one thousand. Ukrainian police posts were established in the Bieszczady Mountains and the Low Beskids as well as other locations, where officers ruthlessly pursued Poles attempting to cross through Slovakia and Hungary to get to France. Ukrainians also served in the industrial (Werkschutz) and railroad (Bahnschutz) police.

German policy made it quite common for Ukrainians to "believe in a political community of German-Ukrainian interests"². A large number of them, therefore, fleeing from Soviet occupation, sought refuge with the Germans, some twenty thousand in all. What they failed to realize was that the Nazi leadership was treating the Ukrainian question purely instrumentally. Hans Frank warned subordinate officials as early as 1940 not to fuel Ukrainian hopes for independence, stating bluntly: "The Ukrainians are admittedly friends of the German people, but are not their confidants"³.

Most lands inhabited by Ukrainians were annexed by the Soviets. Eastern Galicia and Volhynia, following "elections" to the People's Assembly of Western Ukraine, became part of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. Soviet authorities in the occupied territories tried to introduce the systemic changes characteristic of the USSR as quickly as possible. Industrial plants, trade, banking, and forests were nationalized, and agrarian reform was carried out, with manorial and church property being distributed among the peasants. All independent

2 Ryszard Torzecki, *Polacy i Ukraińcy. Sprawa ukraińska w czasie II wojny światowej na terenie II Rzeczypospolitej*, Warsaw 1993, p. 44.

3 *Okupacja i ruch oporu w "Dzienniku Hansa Franka"*, v. 1, 1939-1945, Warsaw 1972, pp. 249-250.

institutions of local government, economy, culture, and education were liquidated. The Ukrainian language was introduced into schools and state institutions. Polish railroad workers, for example, were dismissed en masse, often being replaced by unqualified Ukrainians.

Part of the regime change was combatting "hopeless, class-hostile elements". For this reason, in September 1939, special NKVD groups followed advancing army units, arresting selected political activists, administrative personnel, and Polish Army officers. In February, April, and June 1940 and May 1941, deportations into the USSR of, among others, military settlers, foresters, so-called "bezhtensy" (escapees from the German occupation), and families of people considered hostile to communism were carried out. The Soviets eagerly exploited ethnic animosities, inflaming mutual resentment in various ways. We read:

Apart from the press and radio, which in the early days conducted anti-Polish propaganda [...] cinemas screened Korniychuk's film "Bohdan Khmelnytsky", which showed impalement of "innocent" Ukrainians and images of the crack-down on Polish nobility by Ukrainian peasants shouting "ryzaty Lachiv" (slaughter the Lakhs!), further enforcing hatred of the Poles⁴.

The repressions conducted by the Soviets primarily affected Poles. In February 1940, the majority of Polish colonists were deported deep into the USSR. Since Ukrainian circles primarily directed their resentment against them, we can be sure that this action was met with the undisguised approval of the local Ukrainians. As a result of the repressions, the Soviets managed to unravel and bring under their control a significant portion of the Polish underground. From July 1940 on, however, repressions against the Poles began to diminish, while being more and more often directed against Ukrainians. Although Ukrainian national activists had been persecuted since the beginning of the occupation, the number of those arrested began to rise sharply in the second half of 1940. The communist economy of shortages, the reign of the Soviet party and state cadres, and the collectivization of agriculture that had been underway since 1940 created resentment among the population and increased the influence of the OUN. The Soviets could not have failed to notice this threat.

4 Jerzy Krasowski, *Wspomnienia Wołyniaka*, neither date nor place information for publication available, p. 81.

3.2 Creation of Oun-Bandera

On September 13, 1939, Stepan Bandera was released from a Polish prison and arrived in Lviv shortly after, where he met with OUN organizers. Collectively it was decided that he should make his way to the German occupation zone and resolve a dispute that had arisen there within the organization between the “old” officers of the WUPR and the “young” ones advocating more radical policy.

In December 1939, Bandera met with Melnyk in Rome. Given the uncertain course of the war, Bandera proposed that Melnyk travel to neutral Switzerland to represent the organization internationally. At the same time, the plan was to establish two autonomous OUN centers abroad – one in the territories remaining “within the orbit” of Germany (thus also in Poland) and the other in Canada or the USA. The “youths” also expected Omelyan Senyk and Yaroslav Baranovskyi to be removed from the OUN leadership. The latter was accused of being an agent working against the OUN, supposedly evidenced by his brother Roman’s cooperation with Polish police. Bandera’s dislike of Baranovskyi was compounded by the fact that he had lost to him in a rivalry for the affections of a woman, one Anna Chemerynskaya, for whom it seems he had deep feelings.

The demands of the young radicals made Melnyk a puppet in practice. His departure for Switzerland was tantamount to a loss of influence over the organization and relinquishment of power to the local, so-called German centre. It is no wonder he refused. In this situation, the leaders of the “youths” met in Kraków on February 10, 1940, and announced the creation of the revolutionary faction of the OUN, named OUN-B after Bandera. A merciless and long-lasting struggle for influence inside the organization had begun.

While the Ukrainian emigration, excluding individuals from the GG, tended to side with Melnyk, the Banderites took over nearly all organization structures in Volhynia and Eastern Galicia. In April 1941 the Second Extraordinary Grand Congress of the OUN was held in Kraków. It confirmed the decisions made on February 10, 1940, approved the OUN-B program, and adopted the Banderites’ red and black banner. Stepan Bandera was unanimously elected head of the OUN. Yaroslav Stetsko became his first deputy while Mykola Lebed became his second. The congress also introduced the raising of the right hand (in fascist form) and the words “Slava Ukrainy” – “Heroyam slava” (“Glory to Ukraine” – “Glory to the heroes”) as official organizational greetings. The official Congress program further stated: “Jews in the USSR are a servile prop of the ruling Bolshevik regime and the vanguard of Muscovite imperialism in Ukraine. The anti-Semitic sentiment of the Ukrainian masses is being exploited by the Moscow government to divert their attention from the real causes of evil and to induce them to pogroms against the Jews during the uprising. The



Fig. 14

Stepan Bandera, OUN activist. In 1940 he caused a split within the OUN, becoming head of the OUN-B faction.

Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists combats the Jews as a crutch of the Moscow-Bolshevik regime, and at the same time makes the national masses aware that the main enemy is Moscow”⁵. This statement shows how widespread the concept of “Żydokomuna” (Judeo-Communism) was in the OUN, combining anti-communism with anti-Semitism.

The Banderites wanted to start an armed uprising against the Soviets as soon as possible. The date for the end of uprising preparations was originally set for mid-May 1940. However, Soviet arrests forced the Banderites to postpone the planned initiation of open-armed struggle until the fall of 1940, later even to the spring of 1941. To strengthen the network in the Soviet occupation zone, men and equipment were transferred from the GG to Volhynia and Galicia, leading to constant clashes with NKVD border troops. Between April and October 1940 alone, the Soviets detected and liquidated 38 OUN units numbering 486 people. Occasionally Bandera bid goodbye to the departing groups personally. Bohdan Kazanivskyi would recall:

There was no comfort or promise of a comfortable life in the underground. [...] The Providnyk's words “I believe that you will not disappoint the hopes I have

5 *Українське державотворення. Акт 30 червня 1941. Документи і матеріали*, ред. Орест Дзюбан, Lviv-Kyiv 2001, p. 11.

placed in you” were a guiding light for us and gave us the strength to endure many things later on. [...] I was impressed in a way I had never been before⁶.

The instructions sent to Ukraine in early 1941 made the start of the uprising dependent on the outbreak of war. Groups of insurgents were to attack Red Army subunits, kill officers and political commissars. It was recommended to use the turmoil of war to liquidate “inconvenient” Polish, Soviet, and Jewish activists. Dmytro Myron, one of the leading OUN-B organizers, warned against those “who are hostile to Ukraine and deny the Ukrainian people the right to their native land, for example the Polish intelligentsia, Mazurian colonists, Polish clergy, Moscow-Bolshevik agents, and blind tools of the hostile regime”⁷. Alongside the creation of small sabotage groups, the Germans decided to form two larger units out of Ukrainians, each with the strength of a battalion. In April 1941 the “Nachtigall” (“Nightingale”) battalion was formed in Neuhammer (Świętoszów), consisting of three hundred and fifty soldiers. It included several later UPA commanders, among them Roman Shukhevych, Vasyl Sydor, and Oleksandr Lutsyki. A second Ukrainian battalion, “Roland”, was formed in early 1941 in Austria.

3.3 The Act of June 30, 1941

On June 22, 1941, the German army invaded the USSR. Immediately after the outbreak of war the OUN underground commenced armed anti-Soviet operations. Bandera managed to seize control of 213 towns. On June 24 the OUN initiated armed efforts in Lviv, firing at Red Army subunits. By evening, however, Soviet soldiers had managed to get the situation under control.

The German assault forced the Soviets to withdraw from Volhynia and Eastern Galicia. Before leaving, though, they murdered those prisoners they had not managed to evacuate. In Lviv alone, more than three thousand detainees died in this way. Most of the dead were Ukrainians, but Poles comprised the second most numerous ethnic group. These murders gave the Germans an excellent argument to justify their repressions. Einsatzgruppe C and D operated in Ukraine and were tasked with killing captured communist commissars and Jews, closely following behind the front line.

The advancing Wehrmacht was followed by special OUN-B marching groups. The OUN organizers in the German-occupied areas propagandized for

6 Богдан Казанівський, *Шляхом Легенди*, London 1975, p. 118.

7 Максим Орлик (Дмитро Мирон), *Ідея...*, p. 200.

the creation of an independent Ukrainian state. They selected local authorities from among people who disliked the USSR. Banderites tried to harm their rivals from the OUN-M at every step. They were most likely responsible for the killing of Mykola Stsiborskyi and Omyelan Senyk, well-known Melnykites, in October 1941 in Zhytomyr.

A separate OUN-B group was sent to Lviv, where – sidelining German permission – a decision was made to announce the formation of a Ukrainian government immediately after the city's capture. Their haste may have been encouraged by the situation in Lithuania, where an organization similar to the OUN, the Lithuanian Activist Front (LAF), triggered an anti-Soviet uprising and restored Lithuanian statehood in Kaunas on June 23 (this government lasted six weeks and ceased to function in early August as it was not recognized by the Germans).

On June 30, 1941, the "Nachtigall" battalion entered Soviet-abandoned Lviv at dawn without a fight. Its soldiers took to securing public buildings in the city, while closely cooperating with OUN-B members. Troops were shocked to discover the corpses of victims of mass executions in Lviv's prisons, even more so given that Roman Shukhevych's younger brother Yuriy was among the dead.



Fig. 15 Civilian population greeting the German Army entering Lviv. On the left a fragment of the Latin Cathedral is visible.

That same morning, following behind the German troops, a special group of Banderites arrived in Lviv to take over control of the city. It was led by Yaroslav Stetsko. In the evening, a meeting of notable Ukrainian activists took place at 10 Rynek Street. A representative of German military authorities was invited as an observer. The Act of Rebirth of the Ukrainian State was read out, which stated that “by the will of the Ukrainian nation”, the Bandera-led OUN appoints a government headed by Yaroslav Stetsko. The Act included one phrase – later erased from official OUN documents – that read: “The reborn Ukrainian State will closely cooperate with National Socialist Greater Germany, which, under Adolf Hitler’s direction, is creating a new order in Europe”⁸.



Fig. 16

Yaroslav Stetsko – one of the OUN-B’s main organizers, from June 30, 1941, head of the Ukrainian government formed in Lviv by the Banderites. He was arrested by the Germans in July 1941 and alongside Stepan Bandera was imprisoned in Sachsenhausen camp.

Immediately after the meeting Stetsko went to a broadcast station in Lviv controlled by OUN members (named at the time after Y. Konovalts) and announced the Act over the radio. At the same time, he sent letters to the leaders of Italy, Spain, and Croatia, respectively Benito Mussolini, General Francisco Franco, and Ante Pavelić. In his letter to Mussolini, he wrote about the creation of a Ukrainian state “on territory freed from Muscovite-Jewish occupation” while expressing the hope that “Ukraine will take its rightful place in the new, just fascist order that should replace the Versailles system”⁹.

8 *Українське державотворення...*, p. 123.

9 *Ibidem*, p. 137.

On July 1, 1941, an order was issued by the head of the OUN-B in Eastern Galicia, Ivan Klymiv. In it, Klymiv introduced himself as Commander-in-Chief of the Ukrainian People's Revolutionary Army (UNRA), created to defend "the Ukrainian people and its advocate, the Providium of Ukrainian Nationalists headed by Stepan Bandera". He introduced at the same time martial law and revolutionary tribunals. All crimes against the Ukrainian state and army were to be severely punished: death, imprisonment in concentration camps, arrest, or confiscation of property, while sentences were to be carried out within twenty-four hours. In the order he explicitly declared: "I am introducing collective (family and national) responsibility"¹⁰.

At first, the Poles likewise greeted the outbreak of the German-Soviet war with hope for an improvement in their lot. However, the formation of the Stetsko government and the Germans' favouring of Ukrainians caused great concern. The news that dozens of professors from Lviv's universities had been shot sparked a tremendous deal of horror. To this day it is not uncommon to attribute this crime to the soldiers of the "Nachtigall" battalion. Contrary to popular opinion, however, they were not responsible for this execution, though it should be duly noted that it was probably OUN-M members who provided the Germans with proscription lists. The academics were liquidated by German Einsatzgruppen, which the perpetrator of this crime, Hauptsturmführer Krüger, admitted to Karolina Lanckorońska. The same SS kommando later murdered Polish secondary school teachers in Kremenets and Stanyslaviv (modern-day Ivano-Frankivsk).

This does not mean that no Poles died at the hands of Ukrainian nationalists in 1941. There were several hundred murders of people of Polish descent perpetrated by OUN members or newly formed Ukrainian militias. In Lviv alone, a group of about one hundred Polish students was murdered, probably shot by Ukrainian police (perhaps in revenge for the Lwów Eaglets' actions in 1918). This heralded the OUN's ruthless rule over the Poles. The plans of Stetsko's government that we know of seem to indicate that the Polish population, at least in part, was to be forcibly assimilated, while the intelligentsia was most likely to be murdered, following the German model. The first days of "state life" concerning Poles in OUN-B instructions read:

Exterminate in battle, especially those who defend the regime, resettle onto their lands, exterminate mainly the intelligentsia, who must not be admitted to any office; and in general, prevent the production of intelligentsia by, for example, access to schools, etc. As an example, the so-called Polish peasants must be assimilated, making them aware at once, even the more so in this hot,

10 *Ibidem*, p. 131.

fanatical time, that they are Ukrainians, only of Latin rite, forcibly assimilated [by Poland – G.M.]. Destroy the ringleaders¹¹.

Over the summer of 1941, however, the fate of the Jews appeared much worse than that of the Poles. After the outbreak of the German-Soviet war, a wave of pogroms swept through the territories occupied by the Wehrmacht. Although they were inspired by the Germans, the direct perpetrators were the local population: in Lithuania – Lithuanians, in the Białystok region (for example Jedwabne) – Poles, in Volhynia and Eastern Galicia – mainly Ukrainians. According to German reports, “the Ukrainian population showed [...] commendable activity with regard to the Jews”¹². A wave of anger burst forth by revelations of mass crimes committed in prisons by the Soviets. The local Jewish population was widely blamed for these. The Germans skillfully worked to manipulate such sentiments. In Dobromyl Ukrainians set fire to a synagogue, while in Sambir they killed fifty people. In Lviv an enraged mob drove about a thousand Jews into prison, mistreating them and carrying out lynchings. Jews were forced to carry out exhumations, wash the corpses of the dead decomposing in the heat, then bathe in the water used for this purpose. They were beaten, cursed at, and subjected to other forms of harassment. Work lasted from dawn to dusk, with neither food nor drink being provided. Numerous murders took place. Soldiers of the “Nachtigall” battalion probably participated in the Lviv pogrom, though not as an organized unit.

The next wave of anti-Jewish repression in Lviv came on July 25-27, 1941, during the so-called Petliura Days (UNR leader Symon Petlura was killed by a Jewish assassin on May 25, 1926). The pogrom began at approx. 5 AM. Militiamen rushed into Jewish homes, drove out the inhabitants, committed beatings and robberies. About one and a half thousand people were killed. In the memoirs of Rabbi David Kahane we read:

Even today I'm not able to determine who organized these “days” or, if to be precise, who concocted the idea. Was it the Gestapo who suggested this “brilliant idea” to the Ukrainian police, or did the Ukrainians themselves come up with it as an act of revenge for Petliura's death? [...] One could only take revenge for Petliura's blood with more blood. And that is exactly what happened¹³.

The role of the OUN-B in these events is not clear. There is no evidence that the OUN leadership organized the pogroms, but the Ukrainian militia created

11 ОУН в 1941 році. Документи, в. 1, Київ 2006, р. 104.

12 Українське державотворення..., р. 179.

13 Давид Кахане, Щоденник львівського гетто, Київ 2003, р. 36.

by the Banderites and supported by the population did participate in the anti-Jewish actions. Therefore, it cannot be ruled out that the violence against Jews was a simple consequence of the implementation of Klymiv's order cited above, which made for the use of collective responsibility. There is no doubt though that the OUN-B ruled out the assimilation of Jews and fueled anti-Semitic sentiments in its propaganda. In an instruction by a certain "Levko" (N.N.), probably a local OUN head, issued on August 1, 1941, item 9 reads: "It is forbidden to greet Jews and shake hands with them", while item 10 states: "It is forbidden to sell food to Jews and Poles; those who do not comply with this order must be boycotted; members of the organization will be punished"¹⁴. The proceedings of the Banderite Senior Council on July 19, 1941, during which the nature of the Stetsko government's nationality policy was deliberated, are also telling. German policy towards the Jews was warmly received. It was suggested that the Ukrainian government should seek to deport Jews from Ukraine. As an alternative, the option of resettling the Jewish population to ghettos or chosen smaller towns such as Berdychiv was considered. Stepan Lenkavskiy, a leading Banderite, advocated "individual treatment" for certain persons of Jewish origin – for example, specialists valued by the Ukrainian community, the baptized, and those with family ties to Ukrainians ("quarter and half-breed Jews"). He also declared: "As for the Jews, we will use all methods available for their destruction"¹⁵. Regardless whether he meant physical liquidation or rather expulsion, his statement sounds threatening.

Meanwhile, the fate of the Stetsko government was at stake. On July 3, 1941, the Germans met with an OUN-B delegation in Kraków, accusing the Ukrainians of unconscionable actions and demanding that the proclaimed act of independence be revoked. When Bandera and Stetsko refused, they were put under house arrest in Berlin by the Germans in early July, and after some time sent to Sachsenhausen concentration camp.

On July 16, 1941, Hitler made his final decision regarding the fate of Ukraine. He rejected the proposal to create a Ukrainian state in any form and incorporated Eastern Galicia into the General Government. Territory up to the Boh River was handed over to Romania, while the remaining territories, including Volhynia, formed the Reichskommissariat Ukraine (RKU). On August 1, 1941, it was officially announced that Eastern Galicia had been incorporated into the GG, which the Ukrainians considered incorporation into Poland. On September 5 of that year, the Germans carried out mass arrests of OUN-B

14 Central State Archive of the Higher State Organs of Ukraine (TsDAVOVU), c. 3833, d. 2, v. 3, p. 12.

15 *Ibidem*, d. 1, v. 9, p. 2-3.

members. Hundreds were first sent to prisons and then to concentration camps. Two of Bandera's brothers found themselves in Auschwitz and died there.

News of German repressions and territorial decisions also reached the "Nachtigall" and "Roland" battalions. "Nachtigall" left Lviv on July 7, 1941, reaching Vinnytsia via Zolochiv and Ternopil (committing at least one pogrom against Jews along the way). German decisions caused a crisis in both units. They were therefore withdrawn from the front, transported to Frankfurt an der Oder and reformed into the 201st police battalion. On December 1, 1941, its soldiers signed a one-year contract for further service under German command.

Repression also affected the Melnykites. While the winners in the race for Lviv were Bandera's followers, it was the Melnykites who managed to form the Ukrainian National Council in Kyiv. It did take control over the city but was dissolved by the Germans as early as November 17, 1941. In early 1942 some of its members, including poet Olena Teliha, were executed in Babi Yar.

The year 1941 probably ended in a discouraging mood for western Ukrainians. Disappointment with the stance of the Germans was enormous and would grow deeper with each passing day. As OUN courier Yevhen Stakhiv recalled, "there was terrible depression among the non-arrested members of the organization"¹⁶. On the other hand, the German occupation of Eastern Galicia was, compared to the communist one, a real respite for the Ukrainians living there. Not surprisingly, many of them continued to advocate cooperation with the Germans.

The repression that fell upon the Ukrainian nationalists was probably received by Poles with hidden satisfaction and genuine relief. Fears towards Ukrainian statehood were by no means unfounded. In Polish discussions, July 1941 emerges mostly in the context of the uncertain – as mentioned – participation of the "Nachtigall" battalion in the execution of Polish professors. This misses a much more important point: the OUN-B plans known today lead to the conclusion that the government of Yaroslav Stetsko, had it been recognized by the Germans, would have dealt with the Poles as brutally as the authorities in Ustashe Croatia dealt with Serbs.

16 Євген Стахів, *Крізь тюрми, підпілля й кордони*, Київ 1995, p. 96.

German “Tidying”

The Polish and Ukrainian Undergrounds (1941-1943)

4.1 German Occupation

The Germans implemented a brutal regime in the occupied Ukrainian territories. In the long term, Hitler envisioned the colonization of Ukrainian lands, which is why he saw an excellent pretext and justification for bloody pacification operations in partisan activity. The destruction of as large a portion of the population as possible was to facilitate the realization of far-reaching colonization aims. Unsurprisingly, the main method of German counterinsurgency operations consisted of the slaughter of entire villages.

The Reichskommissariat Ukraine (RKU), which came to include Volhynia, was headed by Erich Koch. Based on instructions from Hitler, he pursued a policy of maximum economic exploitation. Provision quotas were ruthlessly collected, while terror was used in response to the slightest signs of resistance. One of the first German moves was the murder of the Jewish population. About 30 thousand Jews were killed in mass executions in Volhynia throughout the autumn of 1941. Most victims – as many as 21,000 – came from Rivne, which was declared the capital of the RKU. A large massacre took place after the capture of Kyiv, where 33,000 Jews were shot in Babi Yar. In the summer of 1942, the “final solution” began being implemented. Jews were taken outside the ghettos and shot. The Ukrainian police took an active part in these executions. It took part in actions like leading Jews to their place of extermination, killing any who tried to escape. About 150 thousand people were executed. Those who did manage to escape wandered the woods aimlessly. They were relentlessly tracked and killed, with those aiding Jews being severely punished.

In the fall of 1941, executions of Jews also began in Eastern Galicia. At that time, executions were mainly carried out on the intelligentsia and so-called unproductive elements (those unfit to work). In March 1942 the first deportations to extermination camps were carried out, primarily to Belzec. Jews were also murdered at a camp on Janowska Street (modern Shevchenko St.) in Lviv, with some being transported to Sobibor. Others died in mass executions. Most Jews were murdered by the end of 1942, others, gathered in so-called secondary ghettos, were killed by June 23rd, 1943. The Ukrainian police again played its part in the Holocaust in Galicia.



Fig. 17
Erich Koch (left) in the company of Hans Frank. Between 1941-1943 Koch was head of Reichskommissariat Ukraine.

The annihilation, almost overnight, of an entire ethnic group that had been part of these lands' history for centuries must have had an impact on social morality. The extermination of the Jews, like the earlier Soviet deportations, showed that large groups of people could be removed by breaking basic moral principles. An additional demoralizing factor was the ease with which enriching oneself off of the Holocaust came. For the local population, property left behind by Jews constituted a significant temptation; in the eyes of the poor Kresy population, "seizure" of clothing or articles of daily use constituted a hefty gain.

In early 1942 the Germans also began sending people to work for the Reich. Each village was to provide a certain quota of people between the ages of eighteen and forty-five for deportation. In 1942 about 100 thousand people were uprooted from Volhynia alone. This policy of economic exploitation also affected Galicia, though to a lesser extent. It contributed to a sharp decline in pro-German sympathies among Ukrainians. Groups of youths hiding from deportation began forming in the forests, while in Volhynia various partisan groups appeared. Apart from these "wild" units, unaffiliated with any organization, there was the so-called Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) of Taras "Bulba" Borovets, as well as Soviet partisan units arriving via Belarus or – like Colonel Dmitri Medvedev's troop – being dropped in by parachute.

The Germans responded with increased repression. Additional duties were imposed on defiant villages in Galicia, farms were confiscated, and instances of executions of captured escapees occurred. The situation was even worse in Volhynia, where labour deportation boycotts could lead to pacifications of entire villages. The same punishment was meted out for supporting the partisan movement as for hiding Jews. In September 1942, the Germans burned the Ukrainian villages of Borky, Zabollotya, Borysivka, and Kortelisy in response to their helping partisans and harbouring Jews. Poles were also victims of these German pacifications. On November 13, 1942, several dozen Polish inhabitants of Obórki village were murdered. Although Ukrainian policemen served as the core of the pacification expedition, the massacre was carried out on orders from the German occupation authorities.

The Germans also used Ukrainian policemen to pacify villages inhabited by Ukrainians. In these circumstances, however, unlike in massacres of Jews, policemen were reluctant to obey German orders. Rebellious sentiments began stirring among them. In early 1943 the Germans began to consider possible adjustments to their policy towards Ukrainians. In Galicia District, Governor Otto von Wächter managed to convince Heinrich Himmler to create a Galician SS division. On April 28, 1943, its formation was announced, causing enthusiasm among Philo-Germanic Ukrainian circles.

Things were different in the RKU, where Erich Koch categorically rejected any suggestion of easing occupational policies. Meanwhile, the situation on the front was getting worse for the Germans with each passing month. In February 1943, previously besieged Stalingrad fell to the Soviets, who, after their victory at the Battle of Kursk, made it to Kyiv by autumn of 1943. The downfall of the Third Reich was only a matter of time.

4.2 The Polish Underground in the Face of the Ukrainian Question

Between 1939 and 1941 the Soviet security apparatus managed to inflict several heavy blows to the Polish underground in the south-eastern regions of the Second Polish Republic, leading to its complete paralysis. However, after the outbreak of the German-Soviet war, special units of the Union of Armed Struggle (ZWZ) appeared behind encroaching German forces with the task of rebuilding the network destroyed by the Soviets. By 1942 the Polish underground boasted a thriving structure. Volhynia hosted an independent Home Army Region, whereas Eastern Galicia encompassed the Home Army's Lwów Area, consisting of three Regions: Lwów, Stanisławów, and Tarnopol. According to data from 1944, the 27th Volhynian Infantry Division alone had about seven

thousand soldiers in Volhynia Region. In March 1944, the Tarnopol Region numbered 12,340 soldiers, the second most numerous Lwów Region had 10,600, lastly came Stanisławów Region with 3,840 troops. This would give the whole of Eastern Galicia a total of 26,780 men.

Since the beginning of its existence, the Union of Armed Struggle-Home Army (ZWZ-AK) had been preparing for a general uprising. It was to break out precisely when the decomposition of the German army, or, even better, the German state was visible following Allied blows. The main military pressure was to be put on central Poland, where Home Army forces were largest. A supporting role was planned for the Polish underground in the East. Since it was assumed that the situation from 1918 would repeat itself – that, accordingly, the Germans would suffer defeat in the West while maintaining military superiority in the East – AK units in the Kresy were to block the possibility of German troop relocations East to West, carrying out sabotage acts on railway lines. Another important task was to oppose possible “Ukrainian diversion”, i.e., any attempt to create a Ukrainian state within the borders of the Second Polish Republic.

Within Polish designs, Ukrainians were treated as a potential, dangerous enemy. In November 1941 it was believed that for most of them the Poles “are the most formidable and imminent enemy. The Germans can always leave, but the Poles will stay”¹. As General Stefan “Grot” Rowecki wrote:

A collapsing Germany, unless it allies with the Comintern, will give aid to the Ukrainian independence movement as its natural ally against Poland; the Ukrainians will first attempt to create their own independent state, which they will hope encompasses Eastern Lesser Poland, Volhynia and Polesie, and, in general, everything up to the line of the Bug and San rivers².

The leadership of the Polish underground also worried that the Polish-Ukrainian conflict could be presented “as a new ‘predatory war’ by propaganda hostile to us”³.

According to Rowecki, in the first phase of the uprising with the Poles tied up in battle against the Germans, Ukrainian forces would have a decisive advantage over local Home Army units, which would have to “fight for Lwów with difficulty”. It was presumed that the defence of Lviv would have to hold out “a longer period, perhaps even several weeks before relief could be sent from the

1 *AK w dokumentach*, v. 2, Wrocław–Warsaw–Kraków 1990, p. 139.

2 *Ibidem*.

3 *Ibidem*, p. 331.

country in the form of an organized military operation"⁴. Thus, any assistance for the AK in Lviv would be given only after insurgent units had taken control of Greater Poland, Silesia, and Pomerania. Units of the AK Rzeszów Subregion were to strike towards Lviv from their forward positions in the area of Jarosław, Przemyśl, and Sanok. Congruently, offensive operations were to be undertaken by forces of the AK's Lublin Region from the area of Tomaszów Lubelski. Allies were also sought among the Hungarians, whose interests lay in making Eastern Galicia part of Poland. At least one division was to be formed in Hungary out of Polish soldiers interned there, then moved to Lviv after the outbreak of the uprising.

The insurgents' plans also included actions forestalling Ukrainian irredentism. An instruction from October 1942 reads:

To prevent or delay a possible Ukrainian revolt, all their leaders should be neutralized, or isolated at the least. Troops from rural areas should bring them to urban centers as hostages⁵.

When preparing plans for anti-German diversions, it was recommended that they be organized at least five kilometres from human settlements, especially those inhabited by Poles. Diversionary groups were to communicate only in Ukrainian during operations. The goal was to convince the Germans they were dealing with Ukrainians, thus redirecting reprisals onto them.

In January 1943 General Rowecki limited the uprising's scope to Lviv and its environs, believing that only there did a real chance of its success exist. Should a Ukrainian revolt occur, Lviv was to be taken by force. The decision to start the uprising was to be made by the Area Commander himself. This way the chances of pre-empting Ukrainian action increased. Nevertheless, Rowecki recommended that fighting be undertaken "even if we fail to forestall the Ukrainians, and even if, due to a lack of forces, we have to confine ourselves to a portion of the city, even to a few streets or houses"⁶. Later operational plans called first for the capture of the western part of the city and the area in the direction of Przemyśl to facilitate the arrival of relief supplies from the AK Rzeszów Subregion. Only then was the Rawa Ruska-Tomaszów Lubelski road to be cleared so that help could arrive from Home Army Lublin Region. Meanwhile, soldiers from Tarnopol and Stanisławów Regions were to carry out cover diversions and organize the self-defence of the Polish population.

⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁵ Cit. per: Andrzej Leon Sowa, *Stosunki ...*, p. 150.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 151.



Fig. 18
Stefan "Grot" Rowecki, chief commander of the ZWZ, later Home Army. Arrested by the Germans in June 1943 and imprisoned at Sachsenhausen. Murdered in 1944 after the outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising. A pre-war photograph.

In April 1943, insurgency plans were drawn up for AK Volhynia Region. The main effort, due to the Polish forces' weakness, was to concentrate on the western part of Volhynia. It was planned to establish several bridgeheads on the Bug River to maintain communication with the Lublin AK. Polish forces in the eastern districts of Volhynia were to protect the area and defend the population. In case these objectives could not be accomplished, local AK units were to withdraw to established concentration zones in Volhynia's western counties.

Political activity was also stressed. General Rowecki advocated talks with Ukrainian circles in hopes of gaining their support. He urged the Polish authorities in London to take steps to normalize Polish-Ukrainian relations, in this way facilitating talks with Ukrainians at home. He believed that the government-in-exile should issue a declaration stating clearly that after regaining independence, national minorities would have equal rights to other citizens of the Republic (read: Poles).

At the end of 1943, after the USSR broke off diplomatic relations with the Polish government and in the face of Red Army victories, an intensified diversionary operation codenamed "Tempest" (Polish: "Burza") was organized. It was to take place regardless of plans to launch the main uprising. As the frontline was to begin moving through Poland, Polish units were to engage the Germans, taking over cities and larger areas where possible. The aim was to

act as a "host" in the face of the advancing Soviets. In this way, the strength of the Polish government-in-exile would be demonstrated, alongside the Polish character of areas being occupied within the Kresy.

Another domain for the ongoing Polish-Ukrainian contest became the civil administration subordinate to the German authorities. It turned out that Poles could indeed end up in the German-made administration. An underground report in this regard stated: "The lack [...] of an adequate number of professionals has caused the Poles to be accepted for all positions, in the railroads, tax offices, criminal police, most posts are filled by Poles"⁷. The scale to which Poles took over administrative positions was so great that the newspaper *Biuletyn Informacyjny*, No. 44 of November 29, 1942, reported with satisfaction: "Currently, one can already note the phenomenon of the Ukrainians being displaced by the Polish element, which beats them in professional capacity and proficiency"⁸.

4.3 "Not Only Poles but Also the Germans Will Come to Fear Us"

After Bandera's arrest, the acting *providnyk* of the OUN-B became Mykola Lebed. He managed to organize the first OUN-B conference (between the Second and Third Congresses) to work out a new strategy in the autumn of 1941. Those assembled were probably impressed by the success of German troops, who were approaching Moscow at the time. The prevailing opinion was that the Third Reich was on the cusp of another victory. Consideration was given to the fact that starting a fight with the Germans at that moment would only bleed the OUN; organization members were ordered to once again go underground and carry out propaganda and organizational efforts.

The Banderites paid particular consideration to seizing control within the auxiliary police. Service in this police force was seen as an opportunity for the military training of a large number of young people. The intention was probably to take control of it, through trusted individuals, "at the right moment". In early 1942, Yevhen Stachiv, a courier for the Central *Provid* (Leadership), received a letter from the imprisoned Bandera addressed to Lebed. Bandera recommended that the OUN "not carry out any actions against the Germans" and "somehow repair Ukrainian-German relations"⁹. It is difficult to determine

7 *Studium Polski Podziemnej*, (further: *SPP*), 3.1.1.13.2.1, Sprawozdanie sytuacyjne z kraju za okres 22 czerwca-30 września 1941 r.

8 Cit. per: Andrzej Leon Sowa, *Stosunki ...*, p. 133.

9 Євген Стахів, *Крізь...*, pp. 99-100.

whether this letter influenced the outcome of the second OUN-B conference of early 1942. During the meeting, a new composition of OUN-B's Central Provid was elected. Mykhaylo "Leks" Stepaniak became providnyk of Eastern Galicia, while Dmytro "Klym Savur" Kliachkivskyi became head of the OUN-B in Volhynia and Polesia.

Compared to the previous conference, assessment of the situation had clearly changed. The OUN organizers believed that although Germany would win in the East, it would lose the fight against the Western Allies. In their discussion, the OUN men considered various scenarios and possible courses of action. Interestingly, they did consider the option that Germany, in the process of losing to the Allies, would create a Ukrainian state led by Bandera and Stetsko. In the event of this occurring, it was decided to "formally" cut ties with the Germans, so as not to impede possible dialogue with the British.

The Banderites advocated "a softening of Polish-Ukrainian relations" in the adopted and published conference resolutions¹⁰. The point was made, however, that an agreement was possible only "within a context [...] of recognition of the Ukrainian people's right to rule over Western Ukrainian territories", and it was stated that "the struggle against the chauvinistic attitudes of the Poles," that is their desire to restore the pre-war eastern border, "should be continued". A text thusly construed implied that every Pole who did not recognize the Polish-Ukrainian border drawn by the OUN was automatically a "chauvinist", when it was obvious that such a solution was unanimously opposed by all Polish political parties.

The OUN-B also declared it would fight "against intrigues and attempts by Poles to take control of important areas of the economic-administrative apparatus of the Western Ukrainian territories, to the detriment of the Ukrainians"¹¹. This seemingly trivial formulation shows the aversion towards Poles' renewed taking up of positions within the German administration. Resultantly, in 1942 the OUN decided to carry out a series of raids on German department stores in Lviv, conducted in such a way as for responsibility to fall to the Poles (when in the presence of incapacitated guards only Polish was spoken). Leaflets were also left behind with slogans written in Polish like: "We are also people, and we want to live as well" or "Down with Hitler, long live Poland!". On November 11, 1942, the Ukrainians scattered leaflets written in Polish calling for an uprising across Lviv. The hope was that, as a result of this and earlier provocations, German repressions would befall the Poles. The Germans discovered however the leaflets' true authors and arrests were made on Ukrainians.

¹⁰ TsDAVOVU, c. 3833, d. 2, v. 2, pp. 5-7.

¹¹ *Ibidem*.

The Nazis closely watched the activities of what they called the "Bandera-Gruppe". They could not ignore the influence the OUN-B had on the auxiliary police or administration. In January 1942, a group of Banderite-affiliated policemen was arrested in Klevan. In March, twelve Banderites were arrested in Zhytomyr. On July 25, 1942, the Germans shot dead Dmytro "Andriy" Myron in the streets of Kyiv. In November 1942, the Gestapo carried out arrests in Germany, detaining two hundred and ten Banderites in Leipzig, Hannover, Hamburg, and Potsdam. That same year, Ivan Klymiv, who had commanded OUN-B units in Eastern Galicia in 1941, was also captured and tortured to death in prison.

Despite the arrests, the OUN-B continued its organizational, propaganda, and training efforts, with hundreds of new members and sympathizers joining its ranks. Banderite agitators operated in many villages across Volhynia. The primary focus of their lectures was instruction on the nationalist decalogue. They also conducted military training but were reluctant to form partisan units. It was believed that a partisan movement would only bring the Ukrainians bloody losses and that only the "agents of Stalin and Sikorski" would benefit from it. In 1942, Dmytro Kliachkivskyi (aliases "Okhrim", "Klym Savur"), OUN-B's providnyk in Volhynia, issued an order demanding internal consolidation, urging all to avoid being provoked into open combat. In this way, he hoped to calm the ever more combative rank-and-file soldiers of the organization.

By the fall of 1942, however, it became obvious that this course could not be maintained. Groups of Soviet partisans appeared more and more frequently in the field, and, what's more, forest units were formed by other Ukrainian political groups. Of the latter, the most significant were the forces of Taras "Bulba" Borovets, associated with the Petliura movement. Borovets had officially been using the name Ukrainian Insurgent Army for his units since the winter of 1941/1942, directly hailing back to the anti-Soviet insurgency of the 1920s. He quickly gained popularity, as did the UPA organization under his command. The Melnykites also started to form forest units in Volhynia. Ukrainian youth was eager to take part in open armed operations, causing the support for the Banderites to wane. Evermore often OUN-B propagandists were contemptuously referred to as "apostles", that is those only capable of preaching ...

It is, therefore, unsurprising that at a conference of OUN combat officials held in Lviv in October 1942 all participants agreed to the formation of an OUN army. During discussions, Lieutenant Vasyl Ivachiv ("Som", "Sonar") stated: "Let's create an insurgent army! [...] Once we possess an armed force, not only Poles but also the Germans will come to fear us"¹². Over the course of the

12 Cit. per: Анатолій Кентій, *Українська повстанська армія в 1942-1943 рр.*, Kyiv 1999, p. 14.

meeting, a working group was eventually formed. It prepared detailed plans for the creation of the OUN's armed forces and future insurgent activities. These were presented at another meeting in December. The prepared scenarios did not rule out fighting every enemy at once, including the USSR, Poland, and Hungary. The commission also considered how to deal with national minorities once the uprising broke out. As far as Russians were concerned, it was decided that they were susceptible to assimilation and therefore only communist activists were to be liquidated. A worse fate awaited the Jews, who: "should not be liquidated, but deported from Ukraine once given the chance to bring along some of their belongings. They should be reckoned with, as they have great influence in England and America'. In the case of the Poles, it was decided to "evict all [...], allowing them to take whatever they desire, as they [...] will be defended by England and America. Those that refuse to leave – eliminate". The plan was to unconditionally liquidate so-called "active" Poles a day before the mobilization announcement, that is those individuals connected to the underground, enjoying great social authority, or being natural leaders of their communities. A similar fate was to befall the Armenians, who "should be treated in the same way as the Jews, taking into account they are a people devoted to Russia"¹³. Other national minorities on the other hand, including Hungarians, Czechs, and Romanians, were to be left in peace.

As a result of the deliberations, the Banderites decided to proceed with the creation of partisan units, i.e. the OUN Military Detachments. In their preparations for the uprising, the Banderites always took into account the "Nachtigall" and "Roland" battalions. Both units, having been reformed into the 201st police battalion, were sent to Belarus. The company commanders in this battalion were Roman Shukhevych and Vasyl Sydor. These Ukrainians were used in anti-partisan and probably pacification actions. The battalion's area of operations, however, was heavily saturated with Soviet partisans. On September 29, 1942, Roman Kashubynskyi's platoon fell into a Soviet ambush, and all of its twenty-six members were killed. This defeat made the men of the 201st battalion realize that further service under the Germans would only lead to a bleed-out in clashes with Soviet insurgents.

At the end of 1942, an idea was conceived among the Banderites to move the 201st police battalion to Volhynia and, on its basis, begin forming a partisan force. It is unclear however why this ultimately did not take place. Mykola Lebed did indeed give an order for the battalion to move into the forests, but

13 *Polacy i Ukraińcy pomiędzy dwoma systemami totalitarnymi 1942-1945*, v. 1, Warsaw–Kyiv 2005, p. 209 (*Polska i Ukraina w latach trzydziestych–czterdziestych XX wieku. Nieznane dokumenty z archiwów służb specjalnych*, v. 4).

it was not carried out. Roman Shukhevych claimed the order had only reached him when the unit had already been disbanded. This matter affected relations between Lebed and Shukhevych, as the former did not believe the explanation given. As it seems, this was not without reason – directing an insurgency in Volhynia was certainly not a dream for members of a battalion hailing from Galicia and would also have made the struggle over the organization's leadership significantly more difficult for Shukhevych.

These Ukrainians, instead of deserting to the partisans, simply refused en masse to renew their contracts once the one-year service had expired. It is difficult to state that they suffered any repercussions for this. The Germans sent the regulars to Galicia in groups, allowing them to return home. The officers, however, were placed under house arrest and ordered to report regularly to the Gestapo. It is unsurprising that a great many of these "legionnaires" – officers and NCOs alike – quite quickly found themselves in the OUN underground. Among them were Roman Shukhevych and Vasyl Sydor.

Bandera's UPA – the First Operation

In December 1942, the OUN-B's Provid ordered the formation of partisan units in Volhynia. This was welcomed with relief by the Volhynian OUN-B leadership, as no one doubted the situation required decisive action. From 1942 the OUN-B's activities in Volhynia were led by Dmytro "Klym Savur" Kliachkivskyi, a native of Eastern Galicia (Zbarazh to be exact). He was born in 1911, and as such was a typical representative of the Banderite generation. He had become involved in the nationalist underground in the Second Polish Republic, and during the Soviet occupation was in charge of the "Yunaks" (a youth subdivision of the OUN) in Stanyslaviv province. Arrested by the Soviets and sentenced to death, he managed to escape from prison in Berdychiv after the outbreak of the German-Soviet war. Following a wave of arrests in the OUN carried out by the Gestapo in 1941, he was promoted to the Banderites' top leadership.

Klym's decision-making was strongly influenced by Ivan "Dubovyi" Lytvynchuk, who led the OUN-B in north-eastern Volhynia. It was in this region that Hryhoriy "Dovbeshka-Korobka" Perehyniak's sotnia (the equivalent of a company) was formed out of OUN militias at the beginning of February. A sotnia was formally an OUN Military Detachment (which is what the Banderites termed their partisan units); only after the name Ukrainian Insurgent Army had become popular was this nomenclature applied to Detachments. Nonetheless, it was the OUN-B's first partisan unit, for this reason being deemed the leading sotnia of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (subordinate to the OUN-B) in July 1943 in the UPA publication "Do zbroyi".

The sotnia's commander, Hryhoriy Perehyniak, was born on January 22, 1912, in Staryi Uhryniv, Kalush district to a poor family (his mother made her living off a small farm after the death of her husband). Once an adult he worked as a farmhand, later learning blacksmithing. In October 1935, he was sentenced to life imprisonment for a murder committed on the OUN's orders. While incarcerated in the Nazi prison at Holy Cross Monastery, he met the likes of Bandera and Lebeda. He was undoubtedly impressed by the fact that he was incarcerated alongside this Bandera character, the son of a Greek Catholic priest. Perehyniak participated in self-educational courses organized by Lebeda, through which he attained a high school degree. As Mykola Klymyshyn recalled: "He absorbed everything he was told like a sponge"¹. In September 1939 Perehyniak was

1 Микола Климишин, *Спомини про Провідника ОУН Степана Бандеру*, in: *Степан Бандера: документи і матеріали*, ed. Микола Посівнич, Lviv 2006, p. 86.



Fig. 19
Dmytro Kliachivskyi (pseudonyms
“Okhrym”, “Klym Savur”) – OUN organizer,
later OUN-B, the first commander of
the UPA. from 1943 he led the UPA in
Volhynia.

released, working actively in the Banderite ranks afterwards within the German occupation zone until June 1941. He served in the Werkschutz in Starachowice and passed three OUN military courses: recruit, non-commissioned officer, and officer. In 1941 he arrived in Volhynia alongside OUN-B marching groups. He took the post of Sarny district's deputy providnyk for organizational matters. At the turn of 1942/1943, on the orders of “Dubovyi” Lytvynchuk, he formed the UPA's first sotnia. The formation, according to OUN activist Roman Petrenko, was created “for special assignments”².

“Dovbeshka-Korobki's” unit was probably formed out of the merger of several village self-defence groups, the so-called Samooboronne Kushchovi Viddily (SKW). Once combined into an independent sotnia, the SKW units attacked Volodymyrets in early February 1943. This was the first Banderite partisan operation against the Germans and is regarded as such in every prominent monograph concerning the UPA. Information about the attack, however, is rather scarce. Its direct cause was supposed to be the imprisonment of an old OUN activist, “Dibrova” (N.N.). Upon hearing the news, “the decision to attack the Ordnungspolizei district HQ and free Dibrova was made at a meeting of OUN field command that included Dubovyi”³.

2 Роман Петренко, *За Україну, за її волю (спогади)*, in: *Літопис УПА*, v. 27, Toronto–Lviv 1997, pp. 76–77.

3 *Ibidem*, p. 78.

The attack on the town was carried out on the night of February 7-8 (or 8-9), 1943. The attackers were armed with a variety of weapons: Nagant revolvers, rifles, automatics, some carried only pikes. In addition to firearms, many had knives and axes tucked into their belts. There was an auxiliary police post in town consisting of Cossacks, former Red Army prisoners, now commanded by the Germans. It probably numbered about ten men, given the size of the building where the police post was located (and according to a commemorative plaque of the “first UPA operation”, which has survived to this today). It could not have accommodated more than a dozen or so police.

The insurgents captured the police station without greater difficulty. According to official UPA data, seven people were killed, including the German commander. The partisans captured 20 rifles, 65 blankets, and ammunition. The sotnia lost one man with two wounded. According to another account of Władysław and Ewa Siemaszko, Ukrainian partisans disarmed the German post in Volodymyrets killing a German and three Cossacks, then abducting six others⁴. Ukrainian historian Volodymyr Serhiychuk assesses the UPA attack thusly: “This armed action against the Nazi occupants [...] was a proclamation that the OUN’s revolutionary faction [i.e. the Banderites – G.M.] had taken the reins in the armed struggle against the enemy”⁵. After disarming the post and probably freeing Dibrova, the “first sotnia” of the UPA withdrew from Volodymyrets. This, however, did not conclude the operation, but rather marked the beginning of a wholesale raid. Upon leaving the town, Perehyniak’s subordinates headed towards the Polish colony of Parośla I.

Parośla, located in Sarny country, was a fairly prosperous village inhabited by twenty-seven Polish families. It was founded in the nineteenth century and its inhabitants engaged in farming and forest work. On the morning of February 8 or 9, 1943, Dovbeszka-Korobka’s sotnia reached the village. The UPA men introduced themselves as a unit of Soviet partisans and demanded food. Each house was entered by several assailants. The unit command, together with the Cossack prisoners, took up residence in the home of the Kołodyński family. Guards were posted to stop anyone from passing through the village by chance. Following a meal, sometime in the afternoon, the imprisoned Cossacks were interrogated and then killed with axes. At the same time, the Poles were informed that an attack was being prepared on the nearby railroad and therefore urged to allow themselves to be tied up – as to spare the village from German retaliation. Even if some of the Poles did have doubts about

4 Władysław Siemaszko, Ewa Siemaszko, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na ludność polską Wołynia 1939-1945*, v. 1, Warsaw 2000, pp. 805-806.

5 *Український здвиг: Волинь 1939-1955*, ed. Володимир Сергіійчук, Kyiv 2005, pp. 59-60.

these “Soviet partisans” intentions, they were unable to resist out of terror. The tied-up villagers were then hacked to death with axes one by one by the assailants. Not even the children were spared. An infant was later found in one of the buildings nailed to a table with a bayonet, a piece of half-eaten cucumber protruding from its mouth.

At least 155 people were murdered – both residents of Parośla and passers-by. Twelve seriously wounded individuals survived. Having marched out of Parośla and on their way to Tseptsevychi, the UPA men killed another fifteen Poles at Topty/Tuptyn khutor (hamlet). Following this attack some of the men were allowed to return home, the rest made their way to a forest camp.

The identity of the perpetrators of the attack on Parośla is confirmed by the testimony of Witold Kołodyński, then a twelve-year-old boy, who survived despite being hit in the head with an axe and having his skull fractured⁶. Thanks to his testimony, we know that the attackers brought prisoners with them, whom they interrogated and then killed in his parents’ house. The men described could only have been taken captive during the attack on Volodymyrets. The fact that all this was the work of Banderites is confirmed in the memoirs of Zofia Grzesiakowa, a Jewish woman and wife to a Pole, who had been hiding in Bielatycze village. On the second day after the tragedy in Parośla, she went to get milk from “a widowed neighbour whose son had gone for exercise”. Mrs. Zofia recalls:

Just before I left the cottage, I noticed something that made my hair stand on end. On a bench against the other wall lay several pairs of lace-up shoes, commonly worn by Mazur women. A few black garments hung on the carryall, while the children banged each other’s heads with Fragnet spoons. The riddle was solved. Trofim had returned from his bloody expedition, and the children were playing with the loot. I ran home like mad [...] it was those who were at exercise that had murdered the Poles⁷.

According to Władysław Kobylański, Józef “Maks” Sobiesiak’s unit, which was operating in the area, took several UPA men prisoner shortly after the massacre: “During the investigations carried out by Maks all the Banderites confessed their guilt. It was they who had murdered the inhabitants of Parośla village”⁸. It is also worth noting that the Ukrainian population living in the area today (with whom this author spoke) had no doubts that the attack was carried

6 Władysław Siemaszko, Ewa Siemaszko, *Ibidem*, p. 738-742, 1213-1218.

7 Zofia Grzesiakowa, *Między Horyniem a Stuczą*, Warsaw 1992, p. 299.

8 Władysław Kobylański, *W szponach trzech wrogów*, Chicago 1988, p. 26.

out by the UPA – though at the same time explaining it as retaliation for the alleged liquidation of a Ukrainian partisan patrol by the inhabitants of Parośla.

After the Ukrainians had left, Aleksander Sulikowski, on his way to market in Sarny, was one of the first to reach Parośla. He entered the village to visit his sister and two aunts. Right away, “he concluded in horror that there were corpses in every house, with not a soul in the entire village”⁹. He immediately informed the nearest German railroad police post, probably in Antonivka, about the tragedy. Soon other Poles appeared in the village.

On February 12, 1943, a funeral for the victims of the crime took place in Parośla. 137 bodies were interred in a common grave (some were buried by relatives in other cemeteries). In May 1943, a small barrow was raised and a cross with a burnt-out inscription was placed at the site: “Here rest the inhabitants of Parośla colony murdered on February 9, 1943”.

On July 30, 1943, Ukrainian soldiers burned down the abandoned buildings in Parośla. In place of the former village, local kolkhoz workers planted a pine forest. Fortunately, the grave itself has survived, though the cross placed on it disintegrated by the seventies. One of the local Ukrainian inhabitants demonstrated a respectable attitude and put up a new cross on his own initiative, to which he added a small obelisk in 1995. He also fenced the grave to protect it from forest animals.

News of the committed crime spread through the area like wildfire: “After Parośla no one slept inside the house, and everyone hid wherever they could”¹⁰. If the UPA had intended to terrify the Poles, they achieved only partial success. Instead, they had mobilized the Polish population to spontaneously organize self-defence in the surrounding villages. Władysław Kobyłański recalled it as follows: “This mass murder [...] became a warning for the entire Polish population of Volhynia. It was decided to guard and defend ourselves, not to sit back with folded arms. From that moment we started to organize the self-defence”¹¹.

The events in Parośla are particularly important given this was the first Polish village where the UPA carried out mass murder. Previously, the OUN-B had only killed individuals or families. Polish historiography often erroneously considers the pacification of the village of Obórki in November 1942 as the beginning of the UPA's operations, in which approximately forty people were murdered. This, however, was a German pacification operation, albeit carried out with the help of the Ukrainian police. Moreover, according to at least some

9 Antoni Gutkowski, *Wołyń. Moje wspomnienia z lat 1916-1943*, Łódź 2004, pp. 66-67.

10 *Ibidem*, pp. 66-67.

11 Władysław Kobyłański, *W szponach ...*, p. 26.

testimonies, the executions themselves were committed by the Germans in charge of the pacification.

In the case of Parośla, however, there is a marked shift. The massacre was not committed by policemen under German orders, but by a unit belonging to an autonomous Ukrainian armed formation. The fact that the UPA's first military action against the Germans was linked to the first mass murder of Poles, as part of a so-called anti-Polish operation, becomes a tragic symbol in and of itself.

It was probably no coincidence that the attack on Volodymyrets and the massacre in Parośla coincided with a meeting of the Volhynian OUN, led by Vasyl Ivachiv in the village of Piddubka in Lutsk county on February 15, 1943. At this meeting, leaders discussed the capabilities the local organization possessed in the event of an armed uprising. We can assume with a high degree of certainty that the course of the UPA's "first sotnia" operation on Volodymyrets and Parośla was addressed in the meeting. Moreover, it is likely the operation itself was connected with Ivachiv's review and desire to test the combat skills of the units being marshaled. Talks of intensifying UPA operations against Soviet partisans also took place. Ivachiv, while agreeing to increase the number of partisan units, advised his subordinates not to propagate their activities. He also stated: "There is a conviction at HQ that the time for armed struggle has not yet come. The question of armed struggle has not yet matured and must be held back"¹².

Less than two weeks after the slaughter in Parośla, on February 22, 1943, a German raid near Vysotsk encountered the UPA's "first sotnia". Following a short skirmish, the UPA retreated, though sotnia commander Dovbeshka-Korobka died in the clash. Perehyniak's death did not spell the unit's demise – it would be taken over by Nikon "Yarema" Semeniuk.

¹² Cit. per: Анатолій Кентій, *Українська...*, p. 20.

The anti-German Address

6.1 The Third Oun-B Conference

The Third OUN-B Conference took place near Olesko between February 17-23, 1943. Among the participants were Mykola Lebed, Roman Shukhevych, and Mykhailo Stepaniak. It took place, notably, after the Red Army's victory at Stalingrad and before its defeat at the Battle of Kharkiv in March of 1943. Thus, it may have seemed to the Banderites that German defeat was very close at hand. They were convinced that the final battle for independence would have to be fought against the USSR or Poland, possibly both opponents at the same time. Fighting the Germans was regarded as a tactical move designed to strengthen the OUN's position in talks with the Western Allies.

A policy speech was delivered by Mykhailo Stepaniak, who warned that the USSR could win the war. He suggested that an uprising against the Germans should begin immediately, and that Ukraine should be freed from occupation before the arrival of the Red Army. In his view, the creation of a Ukrainian government could contribute to increasing dissent between the Western Allies and the USSR, consequently hastening the outbreak of a new war. He also suggested the creation of a unified armed force and a supra-party leadership that would include representatives of other Ukrainian groups alongside the OUN. Stepaniak's concept seems to have ultimately been accepted. The decision was made to proceed with open guerrilla warfare in Volhynia, although it is not clear whether the exact date of its commencement was determined at that time. The newly created partisan army was to be called the Ukrainian Liberation Army (Ukr. *Ukrainske Vyzvolne Viysko*, UVV).

A peculiar fact is that the obligation to raise one's right hand as the accepted organizational greeting was abolished. This was one sign of progressing ideological changes. Members of the OUN who arrived in eastern Ukraine were received with distrust by the local population. The ideas behind integral nationalism were not popular among easterners, and the Banderites were treated as fascists and German allies. In light of this – and given the possible victory of the democratic United States and Great Britain – the Banderites decided to abandon all discredited slogans and names. For the same reason, Lebed decided immediately after the conference that the Banderite OUN would henceforth be called the OUN-SD, i.e. the OUN of Independents-Statists (*Samostiynikiv-Derzhavnikiv*), in time to become simply the Organization of

Independents-Statists (OSD). In the summer of 1943, however, it was decided that the old name OUN-B would stay in use.

The policy pursued by the acting *providnyk* Lebed caused dissatisfaction among some OUN leaders. He was accused of being a dictator, who manifested in his limiting regional leaders' freedom to operate, among other things. This dissatisfaction was particularly evident among officers of the former "Nachtigall" battalion. At an OUN-B leadership meeting held between May 11-13, an open address was made against him by his opponents. Lebed, surprised by the criticism, left the proceedings to stop them. In his absence, however, the members of the *Provid* relieved him of his post and formed a collegial governing body in the form of a three-member *Provid Bureau*. Thus, the triumvirate of Zynovyi Matla, Dmytro Mayivskyi and, as "first among equals", Roman Shukhevych took control of the OUN.

While the struggle for OUN-B leadership was taking place in Galicia, Dmytro "Klym Sawur" Kliachivskyi proceeded to implement the recommendations of the Third OUN-B Conference in Volhynia.

6.2 Ukrainian Revolt

At the beginning of 1943, the Ukrainian police in the Volhynia-Podolia Commissariat, which belonged to the RKU, numbered 11,870. At the same time, German forces possessed 453 policemen and 954 gendarmes (not including weak army units). These bodies were undoubtedly an important instrument of occupation policy, as they helped the Germans control captured areas. The police were deeply infiltrated by the Ukrainian underground, whose leaders from the start assumed that the members of this formation would come over to their side at the right moment.

Thus, any armed OUN-B response had to be connected with a police revolt. It is, therefore, possible that the Banderite leadership in Volhynia, immediately upon learning of the results of the Third OUN-B Conference, ordered their men to go over to the partisans. These desertions triggered a chain reaction of German attempts at counteraction and the ultimate flight of a number of the remaining policemen. It is also feasible that the pre-planned desertions were hastened by the unmasking of policemen affiliated with the OUN and the threat of Gestapo arrests. Major Livanov's July 1943 interview with the commander of the 1st special partisan brigade, Colonel Anton Brinski, who was subordinate to the Red Army's military intelligence, is extremely interesting in this context: "Through provocation, he [Brinski, at the beginning of 1943, G.M.] succeeded in having the Germans arrest and execute police officers in

four districts. The policemen then fled to the woods [...]. As a result, an uprising against the Germans broke out in Volhynia¹. If Brinski's words are to be believed, the Soviets, aiming at police desertions and thus weakening the Germans, did not foresee that the servicemen would go over to the nationalists instead of their units. They unintentionally accelerated the activation of Banderite partisans (which, of course, by no means implies the Soviets were trying to provoke the nationalists to bloody crackdowns on the Polish population, which naturally were a "trademark" idea hatched by the OUN-B leadership). It is difficult to determine today whether the presented hypothesis is true – it cannot be excluded that Brinski's words are misleading.



Fig. 20 A Ukrainian police post in Tarnogród, 1943.

Desertions began in early March 1943. Policemen fled not only from police stations in smaller towns, but also from larger cities like Kovel, Lutsk, and Horokhiv. As a rule, they freed any prisoners and eliminated the German leadership. It was not uncommon for chosen Poles, probably those on OUN blacklists, to be killed "in the process".

On March 9, 1943, Ivan "Kruk" Kymyshyn's OUN-B militia attacked Berezhitsi. Taking advantage of the confusion, Ukrainian policemen attacked and killed

1 National Archive of Belarus (NARB), c. 3500, d. 2, f. 46, pp. 85-95.

the Germans (all ten of them). On March 18, 1943, Ukrainian policemen killed their commander and fled from the post in Boremel. On the night of March 20 (or 22), 1943, a police farming battalion of three hundred and twenty men deserted from Lutsk on the initiative of Stepan "Rubashenko" Koval. Guard units and district police (about 200 men) joined the partisans alongside it. Before leaving, they liberated a POW camp in Lutsk, from which about forty people were freed, and a rallying point for forced labourers. The battalion withdrew to the vicinity of the village of Kolki, where a UPA kurin under the command of Rubashenko was formed on its basis. During the night of March 25-26, 1943, UPA soldiers fired upon Maciejów (Lukiv). The Germans sent the 103rd police battalion, numbering about two hundred and twenty men, in pursuit of the partisans. Immediately after leaving the town the policemen deserted and formed another UPA kurin, headed by the escape's initiator, Ivan "Lysyi" Klymchak. On April 6, 1943, Ukrainian police in Kovel revolted. According to a Soviet partisan report: "The police killed 18 Germans, freed detainees from prison and dispersed the prisoners of a forced labour camp"². Attempts at desertion were not always successful. In Zdolbuniv there was one case of Ukrainian policemen refusing to obey orders. The Germans immediately disarmed them, executed twelve men and sent the rest to Germany.

Between March 15 and April 10, 1943, about five thousand people deserted from the police in total, many of whom remained in the insurgency. Leadership in the partisan struggle was taken over by Vasyl Ivachiv and Dmytro Kliachivskyi. When Ivachiv was killed in a clash with Germans on May 13, 1943, Kliachivskyi took total control of all forces. In practice, the Banderite partisans did not use the name Ukrainian Liberation Army adopted at the Third Conference, since the turn of April and May 1943 having used instead the name Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) popularized by Borovets. It was considered, not without reason, to be the best name in terms of propaganda. At the same time attempts were made to include other Ukrainian groups in the common struggle. Taras "Bulba" Borovets' UPA refused to subordinate itself to the Banderites, managing instead to coordinate joint actions with Melnykite partisan units.

From the moment of the police desertions, that is from March 1943, anti-German riots in Volhynia swelled. These were often connected to anti-Polish purges, thus directed against both Germans and Poles, with the number of Polish victims usually exceeding German losses many times over. It is worth

2 Cit. per: *ОУН-УПА в роки війни. Нові документи і матеріали*, ed. Володимир Сергійчук, Kyiv 1996, p. 29.

noting the Germans did not favourably view massacres of the Polish population, as they disrupted frontline infrastructure.

As the first order of business, the partisans decided to strike at the civil administration of the occupying power to prevent the collection of levies. Numerous attacks targeted administration offices, where employees were killed, and documentation burned. At the same time, milk plants, mills, lumber yards and the like were destroyed. UPA units also attacked district administrative centres and towns in which the Germans had set up so-called resistance points, destroying the weaker posts. They organized ambushes on roads, eliminating small groups of German police. They also carried out attacks on some of the punitive expeditions targeting Ukrainian civilians. They rarely attacked railroads, as it was not in their interest to weaken the Wehrmacht forces fighting the USSR.

The successes of the Banderite insurgency led Klym Savur to decide that the UPA should take full control in areas covered by partisan activities in May 1943. On May 20, 1943, a statement was issued announcing that all anarchy would be resisted. By June 1943 the Banderites felt so powerful that they decided to break the resistance of the Bulbiters and Melnykites; in the following weeks, they made Melnykite partisan groups submit to Klym Savur's command by force.

The escalation of partisan activity in Volhynia surprised German occupation authorities. In May 1943, General Commissioner of Volhynia and Podolia Heinrich Schöne admitted: "that what is happening here" should be considered an "uprising"³. The Nazis reacted to the events in Volhynia on the one hand by intensifying repressive actions, and on the other by bringing in additional forces to replace the deserting police. Town garrisons were reinforced, at the same time, food industry facilities like distilleries, mills, and sawmills were protected as much as possible. In Kovel for example, the 300-strong garrison increased to four thousand after the police deserted. Due to the lack of German forces, the Hungarian Army's 25th Division was sent to Volhynia. A few armoured trains were brought along to cover railway lines. An order was also given to cut down any forest within two hundred meters of the roads.

The situation in Volhynia was assessed as such in one Polish report:

The Germans [...] issued [...] a proclamation to the deserters to return to their units, and when this did not help, German authorities decided to pacify the area [...] the principle of collective responsibility was applied of course, especially in those instances where German property was damaged, or Germans were murdered. For example, for the Zaborol estate's burning [...] they torched the Ukrainian villages of Zaborol, Omelnyk Velykyi and Omelnyk Malenkyi. Any

3 *Polacy i Ukraińcy ...*, p. 479.

locals captured on-site were murdered by SS units. [...] Numerous arrests were made among Ukrainian intelligentsia and Volhynian organizers. In the prisons of Volhynia's towns, mass executions of captured members of Ukrainian bands took place. On Sunday, June 27, 1943, several dozen Ukrainians were executed in Lutsk, another 60 in Krasny⁴.

On March 16, 1943, a German pacification expedition murdered about six hundred residents of the village of Remel in the Aleksandriv region. On April 10, 1943, about one hundred and fifty Germans, including Grenzschutz soldiers, killed between 172 and 425 people in Kniazhe, Horokhiv region. Evidently, German repressive actions against Ukrainians were merciless.

The Germans also decided to take advantage of Polish-Ukrainian antagonisms. Ukrainians who deserted from the police were partially replaced with Poles. Despite the underground's opposition, at least one and a half to two thousand Poles were pulled out of the local Polish population and put under arms in various police units (called *schutzmannschaften*). Additionally, the 202 *Schutzmannschaftsbataillon* (consisting of 360 Poles) was transferred from the GG along with various police units in which *Reichsdeutsche* from Greater Poland and Silesia served. The Germans, both the civil administration and the SS Security Service, also accepted the creation of Polish self-defence units. They allowed them to possess weapons and even supplied them with small amounts, all the while looking the other way to the fact that Polish police posts had more weapons than German regulations allowed.

The Germans tried to act in such a way as to perpetuate the Polish-Ukrainian conflict. As to these Polish reports leave no doubts:

The Germans' method of conducting investigations is that of setting Poles and Ukrainians on one another. It consists of collecting testimonies against Ukrainians from local Poles, and then, after calling the Ukrainians in for questioning, reading these testimonies out to them to draw accusations against the Poles in return⁵.

A policeman from 202 Battalion recalled one speech made by his German platoon commander as follows: "The lieutenant's short speech immediately hits us in the heart. He says: 'Don't shoot innocent people, but you see that in the countryside every Ukrainian is a bandit, whether woman or child'". Awareness of the crimes committed by Ukrainian nationalists and German encouragement

4 Sikorski Institute, AgV8b, MSW, Dział narodowościowy, Raport z 12 stycznia 1944 roku Stosunki polsko-ukraińskie w kraju.

5 SPP, 3.1.1.3.2.1, Sprawozdanie sytuacyjne za marzec 1943 nr 4/43.

meant that police officers often participated in pacifications. Let us refer again to an account devoted to the actions of 202nd Battalion:

The village of Pildhuzne is encircled and burned, the inhabitants shot dead. The village of Zlazne was burned down to the last cottage. We rush out of the forest, unexpected, into the villages and carry out a thorough purge. In each village, we first torch the mills and Orthodox churches, so that soon, within a radius of a dozen kilometres, not a single mill, Orthodox church, nor priest is left, while also destroying grave mounds and monuments⁶.

It is worth noting, however, that though the participation of Polish police in crimes against the Ukrainian population cannot be questioned, their actions are presented in numerous publications in disproportion to their real significance. It is true that Polish police committed war crimes in the region, but not as often as is claimed by Ukrainian authors, who often write about the "Polish-German occupation of Volhynia" as if the Poles and Germans in this area were equal allies. The Poles are wrongly credited, for example, with the pacification of Remel, where in March 1943 the Germans killed several hundred Ukrainians. In the pacification of Malin on the other hand, in which over six hundred people (mostly Czechs) were killed, the Polish police either did not participate at all or only minimally. However, police officers may have participated in the pacification of Derman, in which eighty buildings were burned down and seventy Ukrainians were killed on May 30, 1943.

It should also be borne in mind that Polish police appeared in Volhynia after the massacres of Poles had begun, which is why they were so eager to use violence against Ukrainians. Therefore, one cannot accept the claim that it was Polish presence in the German auxiliary police that provoked the UPA to initiate mass killings. All evidence indicates that the sequence of events was the opposite. This is supported not only by Polish accounts and documents but by Soviet reports also. In one such report, dated May 28, 1943, we read:

The nationalists use mass terror against the Polish population and countryside, and it must be noted that the nationalists do not shoot Poles dead, but hack them with knives and axes, regardless of age or sex. [...] In recent times the Poles have begun to put up armed resistance to the nationalists together with the Germans⁷.

The guerrilla warfare conducted by the partisans and their own limited forces caused the Germans to withdraw from ever more localities, including

6 *Relacja policjanta*, ed. Grzegorz Motyka, Marek Wierzbicki, in: "Karta nr 24".

7 *Український звиг: Волинь 1939-1955*, ed. Володимир Сергійчук, Kyiv 2005, p. 152.

Derazhne, Kolki, and Volodymyrets. By the summer of 1943, Ukrainian partisans had taken control of a portion of Volhynia and Polesia. The Germans “walled themselves in” within towns and strongpoints, moving out into the field only in larger groups. Some towns came under siege. Hidden in their garrisons, the Germans would make sudden excursions into the field to extract levies and carry out various pacification actions. Even the air force was directed against the partisans, tasked with bombing the more distant villages.

According to the plan adopted at the Third Conference, the main blow of the Banderite insurgency was to strike the Germans, while actions against the Poles and Soviets were treated as secondary tasks. It quickly became apparent, however, that the Germans, holed up in their strongpoints, were a difficult enemy to defeat. This in turn encouraged the OUN to direct most of its forces against weaker opponents. Assessing the implementation of the Third OUN-B Conference’s resolutions, Mykhailo Stepaniak stated during his interrogation:

Later on [...] the OUN’s policy concerning armed struggle departed from the conference resolutions and went in the direction that UPA commander “Klym Samur” had put into practice in Volhynia – i.e. fighting against Red (Soviet) partisans and Poles⁸.

In other words, unable to achieve much in operations against the Germans, the Banderite leadership decided to focus primarily on the almost completely defenceless Polish population. The murders of civilians were justified from the beginning by the alleged collaboration of Poles with the Gestapo and Soviet partisans. The Banderites would describe the whole process of eliminating Poles as an “anti-Polish operation”. This term was used in reports and was equivalent to a codename.

8 DA SBU, c. 65, f. 49532, v. 1, p. 17-49, протокол przesłuchania M. Stepaniaka z 25 VIII 1944 r. Пор.: Сергій Кокін, *Анотований показчик документів з історії ОУН і УПА у фондах Державного архіву СБУ*, Київ 2000, p. 15.

The anti-Polish Operation in Volhynia – the Beginning (March-June 1943)

Until 1939, Poles made up about 16 percent of the population in Volhynia. If the 1931 census is to be believed, 346,000 Poles lived in the region compared to 1,418,000 Ukrainians. Given that the Polish community was decimated by Soviet repression in 1939-1941, it is tough to argue that they posed any significant threat to Ukrainian independence efforts. As such, no serious anti-Polish upheavals were expected in Volhynia. Even at the turn of 1942 and 1943, the Polish underground assessed the situation in this region positively. Reports reaching London were rather reassuring. In one we read: “The mood of the masses is such that all attempts by extreme nationalist organizations, like the OUN, to rouse them to some hopeless movement will not, as can be expected, assume any major proportions”¹. Admittedly, the first murders of Poles had already taken place in 1942 but did not manifest as mass killings and therefore did not cause much public concern.

At the beginning of 1943, the number of murders of individuals and families visibly increased. With a high degree of probability, we can consider these acts as a demonstration of the Banderites’ preparations for an anti-Polish operation. For example: On December 31, 1942, the mill owner, a certain Sybilski, was murdered in Sitnica along with his family (four victims); on January 16, 1943, a forester and two game wardens were killed in the village of Sadów. Both murders were committed by Ukrainians. The real “testing ground” for the anti-Polish campaign was the village of Parośla. This massacre proved to the OUN-B leadership that subordinate units were capable of liquidating larger groups of people. The Polish reaction, in turn, made the Banderites realize that there was little chance for the Poles to flee “solely” through threat. When an OUN militia attacked the Marianówka colony, Kostopil district in February 1943, the local self-defence units, having a few rifles at their disposal, put up a resistance and drove the surprised attackers away. Three Poles perished in the clash.

Initially, Poles were killed principally in the districts of Sarny and Kostopol, that is, in the area under Ivan “Dubovyi” Lytvynchuk’s jurisdiction. It was not until March 1943 that the wave of killings spread over a much larger range due to the Ukrainian police desertions. As policemen abandoned their

1 SPP, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne z Kraju za 1942/1943*, no. 1/43, pp. 90-96.

posts they killed selected Poles, often with their families. This development gives the impression that the recommendations of the national gathering of OUN-B military officials were being implemented. An agronomist and three other Poles were killed in Dederki Wielkie, Kremenets district on March 18, 1943. The first group of attackers that arrived at the agronomist's house played cards with the Poles while waiting for their colleagues. Only upon the arrival of the remaining Ukrainian soldiers were the victims shot in a meadow outside the village. The agronomist's wife was left in peace. In March 1943, sixty-four people were killed over a week in Dederkały, Potutorów, Sadki, Bołożówka, Suraż, and Antonówka. In Lutsk district, on March 3, 1943, a group of UPA men coming from the direction of Kolki burned down Łopatek, the summer resort spot of Prince Radziwiłł. About thirty people died there. On March 7, several Polish children were kidnapped from a pasture at the Taraz colony and killed. Also in March, priest Piotr Walczak and three others staying with him at the rectory in the Poznanka colony were murdered. Commenting on these and similar events, one UPA unit commander, Maks Skorupskyi, wrote in his memoirs: "There was panic among the Poles. The mutinied Ukrainian police annihilated a few Polish families that had Gestapo connections somewhere. Poles began to leave for towns under German protection or asked Soviet partisans for security"².

While in other areas "chosen" Poles were the ones to fall victim to OUN, in the area under Lytvynchuk's command there already existed a systematic and predesigned physical liquidation of all Poles. Dubovyi, as it seems, started to consistently "clean" the area of the Polish population in March 1943. In Kostopil district, on the night of March 9, about twenty Poles were killed in the Antonówka colony; on March 12 a dozen or so Poles were killed in the village of Białka; on March 18 Borówka colony was attacked, where twenty-nine Poles were killed. On March 20, several dozen Poles were targeted in Derażne. On March 25 the Polanówka colony was destroyed, with fifty Poles losing their lives. These are only a fraction of known cases of massacres.

Ukrainian attacks prompted the villages to organize their self-defence. This happened, among others, in the Lipniki colony. During the night of March 18, the village's self-defence unit drove off several attackers, and one of them, a former policeman, was captured. He was handed over to the Germans and hanged in Berezne. Władysław Hermaszewski recalls:

Because of the handing over of the captured Banderite, relations with the Ukrainians [...] escalated to such an extent that we became completely isolated

2 Максим Скорупський, *Туди, де бій за волю*, Kyiv 1992, p. 72.

from the surrounding world [...]. Stepping any distance beyond the village, even during the day, could be a death sentence³.

On the night of March 26, Dubovyi's subordinates, reinforced by peasants armed with small arms and special "torching" bands, launched an assault on the village. The poorly armed self-defence (with a dozen or so rifles and one LMG) was unable to stop the attackers. Ewelina Hajdamowicz, a resident of Lipniki, later recounted what had happened: "People started running away in all directions. They were murdered horrifically. They died from bullets, bayonets, axes, in the flames of burning houses that they were thrown into through the windows, or in wells"⁴. A group of Poles hid in a drainage ditch but was surrounded and slaughtered there. In total 179 Poles, 4 Jews, and a Russian woman were killed. About five hundred people escaped the ambush; among the survivors was two-year-old Mirosław Hermaszewski, later to become a Polish astronaut.

On March 27 a group of former policemen attacked the Kadobyszcze colony and chopped up nineteen Poles with axes. Those who survived fled. The colonies of Dąbrówka, Deryca Mała, Deryca Wielka, Dolina Dąbrowa, Jamieniec, Marianówka, and Perełysianka were also burned down that day. Most of the inhabitants of these villages managed to escape. In the early morning of March 29, 1943, Ukrainian soldiers attacked Pendyki Małe, Pendyki Duże, and Pieńki. These villages were first shelled before being assaulted, with those not managing to escape being slaughtered. About one hundred and eighty Poles were killed. Also in March, about thirty people were killed in the Polish colony at Złazno and about twenty in Berestowiec Stary.

On April 6, 1943, in the village of Hrań, UPA men murdered at least thirty-eight Poles. Also in early April, the UPA attacked the Zadąbrowie colony. The local self-defence put up a desperate resistance, thanks to which most of the inhabitants escaped, though eighteen people were killed. At the beginning of April, the Brzezina colony was attacked – here the self-defence managed to repel the attackers. At dawn on April 8, 1943, the UPA struck again, taking the defenders by surprise, who did not manage to fire a single shot. They were butchered mainly with axes and pitchforks, and only those who managed to flee were shot. About one hundred and thirty people died. In the spring of 1943 UPA men killed ten children guarding cattle in the village of Klesów using knives and bayonets.

3 Władysław Hermaszewski, *Echa Wołynia*, Warsaw 1995, p. 63.

4 Cit. per: *Śladami ludobójstwa na Wołyniu. Okrutna przestroga*, p. II, eds. Leon Karłowicz, Leon Popek, Lublin 1998, p. 76.

Yet, these massacres were only a prelude to a massive anti-Polish operation. Everything indicates that OUN-B and UPA command chose the Holy Week of 1943 for the precise moment of a concentrated attack on Polish population centers, this time to cover the whole eastern territory of pre-war Volhynia province. Rumours that “Easter will run red with the blood of the Poles” had already surfaced earlier. These were the echoes of the Ukrainian insurgency’s preparations. Attacks began early in the week, only to intensify during the Paschal Triduum.

In Kremenets district, mainly Ivan “Kruk” Kymyshyn’s unit stood behind the initiation of anti-Polish operations. On the night of April 22, 1943, the UPA surrounded Zabara village in the Shumsk municipality. The attack commenced following a rocket signal. Polish homesteads were set on fire, escaping inhabitants were shot or killed with axes. Those caught were thrown into the burning buildings. About seventy people were murdered in this way. Those who managed to survive found shelter in Shumsk. On Easter Saturday, April 24, 1943, about fifty Poles were murdered at the Huta Antonowiecka khutor, another fifty-six at the Kamieniucha colony. On the night of April 25, eight Poles were killed in the Medwedówka khutor, thirty-two in Zahorce, nine in Wesołówka, along with several families (over 20 victims) in Radoszówka.

The bloodiest UPA attack during Holy Week of 1943 was organized in Kostopil district at Janowa Dolina (modern-day Bazaltove). The hamlet was founded in 1928 as a modern worker settlement for the newly established basalt mine. It was connected to Kostopil, which was 16 km away, by railroad. Before the war, Janowa Dolina was inhabited by about two and a half thousand people, but at the beginning of 1943 this number increased as hundreds of refugees arrived at the settlement. It housed a Union of Armed Struggle-Home Army outpost equipped with a dozen or so rifles and several pistols. A company-sized German garrison also stationed there, occupying the so-called bloc, a former workers’ hotel reinforced with a wooden palisade and sandbags.

On the night of April 22 (Good Friday), UPA units rallied around Janowa Dolina. The railroad track between Janowa Dolina and Kostopil was blocked with tree trunks. The attack was personally commanded by Ivan “Dubovyi” Lytvynchuk and included the UPA’s “first sotnia”, now commanded by Yarema following Perehyniak’s death, alongside the “Shauli” sotnia. The Ukrainians struck around midnight when the inhabitants were already asleep or just getting to bed. The settlement was peppered with small arms and machine gunfire. As they moved in, special assault groups set fire to each house, hurling bottles of flammable liquid and flaming firebrands at them. Grenades were also chucked at some of the buildings. Those who got out were shot at or killed with axes, perhaps also with pitchforks. Many sought shelter in stone cellars,



Fig. 21 A workers' settlement in Janowa Dolina, 1939.

though these turned out to be a deadly trap: most suffocated from the smoke or by asphyxiation. The Ukrainians also set fire to the hospital once having evacuated the sick Ukrainians inside. The hospital's three-person staff was taken outside and hacked to death with axes. The sick Poles remaining inside perished in the flames or, according to another account, too were dragged out of the building and killed.

The German garrison took up defences inside the hotel, from where they opened fire from behind a palisade, preventing anyone from approaching their positions. A group of Poles, meanwhile, resisted from inside the brick buildings at C complex – two attackers were killed, while the third, a worker from the mine, was seriously wounded (he lay moaning in the street all night, until “enraged townspeople finished him off with clubs” in the morning)⁵.

Around 4 AM a German reconnaissance plane appeared over Janowa Dolina, prompting the UPA men to retire. The night's balance sheet was tragic. One hundred buildings had been burned and about six hundred Poles perished, most of them in the fires. The UPA had captured one ton of explosives, its taking later suggested as the main driver behind the attack. Opinions also

5 Bogusław Soboń, *Wołyński życiorys*, Warsaw 1999, p. 86.

circled that the UPA was forced to react, as the German and Polish police there were disturbing the peace among the surrounding Ukrainian population. In reality, Polish police appeared in Janowa Dolina only after the Ukrainian partisan's attack.

It should be added that a dozen or so Poles that owned firearms went outside the settlement to seek revenge. At least five Ukrainians were killed (including a nine-year-old girl). A Russian couple mistaken for Ukrainians was also killed. Survivors of the Janowa Dolina attack were taken by train to Kostopil. Only the powerplant and waterworks staff along with the railwaymen remained at the site.

Janowa Dolina was once again the target of a UPA attack on May 15. Outside the German defence perimeter were the power plant, the transformer station, the hydroelectric station, and many other buildings, all burned down. No one was killed. It was only after this attack that the remaining civilians were evacuated and Polish policemen from 202 Battalion brought in. It is worth mentioning that in the spring of 2003 a plaque commemorating the UPA attack was unveiled in former Janowa Dolina, bearing an astonishing inscription:

In commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army. Here, on 21-22 April 1943, sotnias [...] under the command of "Dubovyi" eliminated one of the best-fortified military bases of the Polish-German occupiers in Volhynia [...]. The German and Polish garrisons were eliminated in battle, POWs were liberated, and the terrorist actions targeting neighbouring villages carried out by the Polish-German occupiers were halted.

At the same time – in May 1943 – the UPA also carried out routine “cleansing” of areas of their Polish population in the south-eastern districts of Volhynia. In these regions, Petro “Eney” Oliynyk was in command. On the night of May 2, 1943, the combined units of Ivan “Kruk” Kymyshyn and Mykola “Khron” Nedvezkyi attacked Kutu. The village's self-defence was based upon the brick buildings in its centre. Ukrainian partisans broke into houses located outside the defensive line, killing residents, plundering and setting fire to homesteads. Meanwhile, they directed intense gunfire at the village center. Around 3:30 AM they retreated. At least fifty-three Poles were killed. Immediately after the attack, the Germans evacuated the village, leaving only Ukrainians. Maks “Maks” Skorupskyi, a participant in the attack, wrote: “Starting with our operation in Kutu, day after day, just after sunset, the sky was bathed in the glow of inferno. The Polish villages were alight”⁶.

6 Максим Скорупський, *Туди...*, p. 87.

This was, unfortunately, true. On May 5, 1943, about seventy Poles were murdered in Szkrobotówka. On May 6, 1943, an attack on Klepaczówka in the Lutsk district resulted in the deaths of about thirty people from small arms. On the night of May 7, 1943, the UPA attacked the colony of Katarzynówka, killing over thirty Poles and people from mixed families. Attacked at the same time were Olganówka, where local self-defence repulsed the assault with reinforcements from Elżbietyn, and Rzeszniówka in the Kremenets district, where about ten people were killed. On the 8 of May 1943, UPA men murdered seventeen people carrying grain quotas to Torczyn on the road there from Koszowo. On the night of May 14, 1943, the UPA's Dubno kurin attacked and partially burnt down, among others, Kudziwola colony (at least 15 victims) and Złoczówka (12 victims). On the night of May 18, they attacked the Adamówka colony (no fewer than 17 victims), the village of Bokujma (27 victims), the Brzezina colony (30 victims), and the Kalinówka colony (about 30 killed).

In the areas further north, attacks were continued by UPA partisan units under Dubovyi. Shaula's sotnia report for May 1943, covering May 3, 4, 15, 19, 23, and 25, emphatically stated: "colonies that cooperated with the Bolsheviks and Germans were liquidated, no losses on our side"⁷. In its report for that same month, Yarema's sotnia did not even provide the dates on which "the colonies and villages collaborating with the Germans and Bolsheviks were liquidated", though context suggests its operations were no less numerous⁸. The same report shows that in May 1943 Shaula's sotnia, apart from conducting anti-Polish operations, organized two ambushes: one on the Germans and another on "Polish-Bolshevik" partisans. Yarema's unit meanwhile fought two skirmishes against the Germans and one against the Soviets.

On May 12, 1943, under Yarema's command the UPA's "first sotnia" attacked the colony of Ugły. The village was first fired upon with incendiary bullets and then assaulted. They quickly broke through the resistance of the inadequate self-defence and took to killing anyone they encountered. The Poles rushed to flee. Of approximately 320 villagers, over a hundred were killed. Attack participant Vasyl "Voronyi" Levkovych mentioned the operation briefly in his memoirs: "We also cleared Ugły village of Poles"⁹.

That same day, Ukrainian partisans in the Sarny district attacked the Karczemka colony, killing at least one Polish family there. A dozen Poles were

7 Report for May 1943 of 1st UPA group from 5 July 1943, in: *Літопис УПА, Нова серія*, v. 2, Kyiv-Toronto 1999, pp. 171-172.

8 *Ibidem*.

9 Василь Левкович "Вороний", *Сторінки з пережитого комбатантом УПА*, in: *Літопис УПА. Бібліотека*, v. 4, eds. Петро Й. Потічний, Володимир В'ятрович, Toronto-Lviv 2003, p. 22.

killed in the Jażwinki colony and nine in Kopyszcze khutor. An unknown number of victims perished in attacks that day in Katarzynówka, Mały Radzież, and Osty, as well as in Dołhe, Załomy khutor, and Chwoszczowata colony. On May 12 Konstantynówka, Radzież, Płoskie, Ubereż khutor, and Janówka were also attacked (in the last village resistance of the self-defence made it possible for the inhabitants to escape).

On May 12, 1943, the UPA attacked Stachówka, where a self-defence base had also been established. Shelters and other fortifications had been built in the village, though this did not prevent casualties. The attack resulted in over forty dead. On May 15 the Ukrainians renewed their attack, but with reduced forces. Several cattle guards were killed, including five children. The defenders were aided by the self-defence of Parośla II and the Germans, who captured three Ukrainian partisans (later hanged in Volodymyrets). Over the coming days, Ukrainian patrols killed several villagers working their fields.

On May 21, 1943, the UPA attacked Aleksandrówka in Sarny country. The attack occurred at dawn when inhabitants had come out of their hiding places. About forty people were killed. Some saved themselves by fleeing, warning other Poles in the village of Rudnia Lwa of the danger. Soon the UPA arrived here as well and, despite the forewarning, managed to murder about thirty inhabitants. In Kostopil county, about ten Poles were killed in Małe Siedliszcze during the night of May 26. A similar number of victims perished in Chwojanka. At dawn on May 26 or 27, the village of Niemilia (Komarnia-Jackowicze) was also attacked with as many as 126 Poles being murdered there. Many others were wounded. One of the Poles is said to have stabbed four attackers with a pitchfork defending himself.

On June 2, 1943, Ukrainian partisans attacked the village of Hurby (a year later a battle between the UPA and Soviets, considered to be the biggest in the history of this organization, took place near here). Using bayonets and axes the Ukrainians murdered about 250 Poles. In the following days, a hunt for wandering individuals took place. In a proclamation to Ukrainians issued in June 1943, Klym Savur admitted the UPA had “made the village of Hurby go up in smoke”. This was supposed to be a “warning and retaliation” for the pacification of Derman-Zaluzhe by Polish policemen and punishment for giving shelter to Soviet partisans¹⁰.

On June 13 the sotnia of one “Kruk” (N.N.) attacked Stachówka for the third time. The Ukrainian attack was supported by fire from two MGs. The village became engulfed by flames. Fortunately for the defenders, reinforcements arrived from Poroda. The relief took out the machine gun nests and forced

10 *Polacy i Ukraińcy ...*, p. 505.

the UPA to retreat. In the morning Germans arrived and shot five prisoners taken captive by the self-defence. In the clash, however, the colony was completely burned down and twenty-two people were killed. Putting up further self-defence in the village became pointless, so the colony was evacuated. During the attack the Ukrainians suffered heavy losses – seventeen killed and five wounded.

On the same day, June 13, UPA soldiers attacked the Głuboczanka colony in Kostopol county, killing about thirty Poles. On June 16 in Dermanka village the UPA murdered about one hundred people. On June 29 the UPA surrounded the Zastawie colony, killing eighty-three Poles with firearms and sharp instruments. That same day in Rivne county twenty-eight Poles were killed in Konstantynówka village and fourteen in Mikołajówka. Estates were also burned in Rivne county throughout June, among them Humienniki, Józefów, Krzywicze, Woskodawy, and Pustomyty. Following one of these attacks, UPA reports stated: “On 24 VI the Polish colony was completely liquidated, there were no losses”¹¹.

Also on June 29, UPA men attacked another colony – Andrzejówka, where Germans had created a Schutzmannschaft. Inhabitants slept inside a brick school. The Ukrainians shelled the building using a small-calibre cannon, damaging its corner. After four hours of fighting, however, three Germans and Poles from the Schutzmannschaft repulsed the attack. Ten Poles who had remained inside their houses were killed. In retaliation, the Germans, together with Polish officers, pacified the village of Krasnyi Sad – between a dozen and a hundred Ukrainians were killed there.

UPA partisans also attacked those Poles who, having escaped, returned to their farmsteads or came back to retrieve food and possessions. In June 1943 the UPA killed fifteen Poles who were returning to their fields in Dębowa Karczma. One seven-year-old girl survived because her mother begged the Ukrainians to let her escape. On June 21 twelve Poles were killed with axes in Płoszcz Łomanowski (Lutsk county) while going to collect their belongings.

In June 1943, as a result of an encirclement imposed by Ukrainian partisans, the town of Kolky was evacuated. The majority of the town's Poles left on German-organized evacuation transports. After the departure of the German garrison, Kolky was immediately occupied by Rubashenko's UPA kurin. One UPA soldier left recollections of this event: “The entire population came out into the streets and welcomed us, women carried milk and food packages into the streets. I noticed that many people had tears in their eyes. They were tears

11 Літопис УПА. Нова серія, в. 2, р. 173.

of joy”¹². He did not mention, however, that the parade was accompanied by a crackdown on the Polish population. UPA men drove the town’s remaining Poles into a Catholic church and set it on fire. About forty people died. Kolky soon achieved capital-city-status of the small UPA republic that would form around the settlement.

According to the calculations of Władysław and Ewa Siemaszko, between February and the end of June 1943 about nine thousand Poles died in Volhynia¹³. Almost four thousand of them were murdered in Kostopol and Sarno counties by subordinates of Ivan “Dubovyi” Lytvynchuk. This was just the beginning of the UPA’s anti-Polish operation.

12 Віктор Новак, *Північнозахідня округа “Турів”*, in: Літопис УПА, v. 5, Toronto 1984, p. 107.

13 Władysław Siemaszko, Ewa Siemaszko, *Ludobójstwo ...*, p. 1045. More details on attacks therein, e.g. on pp. 62, 80, 100-102, 110, 232-237, 363, 421-422, 425, 461-462, 464, 570-571, 579, 589, 679, 690-691, 780, 801.

The Ukrainian Plan of “Removing” the Poles

The original plans of the OUN envisaged the removal of landowners and those Poles settled in Volhynia and Eastern Galicia after 1918 from the future Ukrainian state. It was unambiguously suggested that the nationalists would have no objection to “spontaneous” peasant-led lynchings. The fall of Poland in 1939 relegated the Polish question to the backburner of OUN politics. The only obstacle to the creation of an independent Ukrainian state was the USSR, therefore Poles turned from “occupants” into a “hostile” national minority. The assumptions of OUN-B national policy of 1941, and thus in practice Stetsko’s government, stipulated the annihilation of the Polish intelligentsia, the forced assimilation of the rural population, and the deportation of all remaining Poles. It is easy to see the indirect German inspiration behind these plans. The Banderites clearly wanted the Poles living in Eastern Galicia and Volhynia, and probably also in Zamość and Przemyśl regions, to suffer the same fate as the Polish population in the lands annexed to the Reich. It should be recalled that at the turn of 1939 and 1940, the Germans murdered tens of thousands of Poles (mainly representatives of the intelligentsia) in Pomerania and Greater Poland, drove several hundred thousand more out of these territories into the GG, and forced a portion of the remaining Poles to accept German nationality. Ukrainian nationalists hoped to copy these actions on “Ukrainian ethnographic lands”.

However, the arrests in 1941 and the Third Reich’s policy towards Ukrainians made OUN organizers realize the situation was more complex than they had previously thought. In 1942, there was a growing conviction among the Banderites that the Germans would win the war in the East but lose it in the West. In this event, a repeat of 1918 seemed quite realistic, that is, the outbreak of another Polish-Ukrainian war over Lviv, which the Banderites were not only ready to ignite but also win at any price. The aversion to Poles prevalent in the Ukrainian milieu is evidenced by the figure of Vasyl Mudryi. On September 2, 1939, he declared loyalty to the Polish Sejm as an MP, while in 1943, writing for the Banderite periodical “*Ideya i chyn*”, he stated:

If Poles wanted to rebuild Poland and Ukraine collectively [...], then this could be seriously discussed. But the thing is, such Poles don’t exist. The solution is

simple! Treat with the Poles [...] only once we have in our hands the same power as they do. Only then will they respect our right to life [in a free state – G.M.].¹

The designs made by the Banderites in 1942 give a seemingly contradictory picture of the group's intentions. On the one hand, the resolutions adopted at the 2nd OUN-B conference in April 1942 demonstrated willingness to seek a compromise with the Poles and, at the same time, stated that the Poles had to recognize the Ukrainian right to Volhynia and Galicia. On the other hand, at the end of 1942, the OUN-B's military officials decided that Poles and Jews should be resettled (or rather driven out) under penalty of death from all lands considered Ukrainian at the outbreak of the "uprising". I believe that the apparent contradictions in these two documents indicate only the intention to pursue a two-pronged policy. The OUN-B leadership was aware of how unrealistic the Polish government agreeing to any border adjustments is, especially considering the station of Ukrainian circles in the international arena was simply non-existent. From the Polish point of view, the main threat to the eastern territories of the Second Polish Republic was posed by Soviet claims. Statements about the desire to reach an agreement with Poland should therefore be interpreted as a propaganda game calculated to make a positive impression on Western public opinion. Of course, talks with the Polish underground were planned, but achieving much in this way was not expected. Therefore, it was decided to simultaneously carry out a policy of accomplished facts and "remove" the Polish population from the disputed territories in advance so that the area would be ethnically cleansed before possible peace talks at an international conference. The nationalist creed according to which a future Ukraine should be a mono-ethnic state only strengthened the Banderites in this intention.

As planned, "deportations" and physical liquidations of "active" Poles (i.e. people with social authority) were to be carried out by the gendarmerie and, in certain cases, by the OUN Security Service. It was forbidden to deploy soldiers of the new army-in-creation for such activities. This may suggest that the whole action was treated purely as a police operation and not a military one (eventually, as we know, this intention diverged from reality and UPA units were used for anti-Polish operations en masse).

The course of the UPA's first operations in Volodymyrets and Parośla markedly differed from the arrangements made during the meeting of OUN-B's national military officials. When in March 1943, per the findings of the Third Conference, the Banderites began large-scale partisan operations in Volhynia,

¹ Ярослав Борович (Василь Мудрий), *Україна і Польща*, in: "Ідея і чин" 1943, № 4. Cit. per: Літопис УПА, v. 24, Toronto–Lviv 1995–1996, p. 195–196.

these were accompanied by numerous murders of Poles. While the killings committed by deserting policemen can be considered observant to the guidelines of the military officials' conference, the subsequent attacks on Polish villages in the eastern districts of the Volhynian voivodeship are not. All the more so considering Ukrainian leaflets calling on Poles to leave appeared very rarely and only in certain areas in Volhynia. According to Zenobiusz Janicki, they were distributed mainly in April 1943, before Easter, along the road from Kivertsi to Trostianets. Janicki quotes their content from memory:

The Ukrainian Insurgent Army has been formed, which will fight for the freedom of Ukraine, and you, Lakhs, utikajte, poki szyroki szlachy na mazurski piski, a na światoho Marka ostanetsia Polakiv garstka².

According to reports from the Polish underground, one of the UPA commanders assessed the situation as follows:

On March 1, 1943, we begin an armed uprising. It is a military action and as such is directed against the occupant. However, the current occupant is a temporary one, so we should not lose our strength in the fight against him. The crucial occupant is the one coming. As for the Polish question, it is not a military question, but a minority one. We shall solve it as Hitler solved the Jewish question. Unless they remove themselves³.

These words seem to confirm the belief that the Volhynian leadership was influenced by the Holocaust. It showed (as did the earlier Soviet deportations) that entire groups of people could be completely removed. The "solution to the Jewish question" probably gave rise to the temptation to carry out a similar action against the Polish population. All the more so given the OUN-B's members included many policemen who had been involved in the extermination of the Jewish population and therefore had "experience" in carrying out ethnic cleansing.

It seems, therefore, that under the Holocaust's influence the OUN-B leadership in Volhynia decided on its own initiative to "bend" the already ruthless recommendation to deport Poles by force, and instead simply murder the entire Polish population without "dallying around" with leaflets ordering to leave. If this hypothesis is true, the relevant decision was most likely made by three people: Dmytro "Klym Savur" Kliachkivskyi, head of the Volhynian OUN-B, Vasyl "Som" Ivachiv, OUN-B military official, and Ivan "Dubovyi" Lytvynchuk, commander of OUN-B and UPA forces in northeastern Volhynia,

² Zenobiusz Janicki, *W obronie Przebraża i w drodze do Berlina*, Lublin 1997, p. 30.

³ *SPP*, Kolekcja 13, v. 61, *Relacja mjr. v. Klimowskiego*.

the region where the first massacres of the Polish population were recorded. Stepan Yanishevskyi, a leading OUN organizer in Volhynia, testified to Dubovyi being “one of the initiators and most active organizers of the crackdown on the Polish population” and who “often boasted of his ‘merits’ in liquidating Poles”⁴.



Fig. 22 A mass grave of Poles murdered in Parośla by Perehyniak's sotnia. Only the cross indicates that a village had ever existed there.

Initially, the Volhynian Banderites intended to follow the instructions of the Central Provid and treated the anti-Polish operation as secondary (which does not change the fact that the number of attacks on Poles was greater than on Germans from the beginning). “Displacing” Poles from Volhynian’s eastern districts, they treated these as “police” actions or combined them – such as in Janowa Dolina – with attacks on Germans. It was probably only once German forces were pushed back to their “resistance points” that the temptation to carry out a complete ethnic cleansing of the whole of Volhynia arose. If the Banderite leadership had any initial doubts about expanding the scope of the anti-Polish campaign at all, these were dispelled by the outcome of their operations. This bore a paradox: the UPA’s actions forced the surviving Polish population to create resistance centres or to flee under the protection of German garrisons and Soviet partisans, creating the impression among

4 *Polacy i Ukraińcy ...*, p. 399.

local Ukrainians that accusations of collaboration with the Germans and Soviets levelled against the Poles were correct. This was reinforced as deserting Ukrainian police were replaced by a Polish force that, as already mentioned, was used by the Germans to carry out bloody anti-Ukrainian operations. The Banderites tried to take advantage of this situation to gain full support for their de-Polonization designs from Volhynia's Ukrainian population. They presented themselves as defenders against "Polish terror".

An important argument for why most of the UPA's attacks were directed against Poles could be the lack of weapons and experience of Banderite partisans. Large quantities of weapons and ammunition were not needed to destroy the Polish population. The partisan units, however, got a chance to taste victory. Cruel and bloody, but victory, nonetheless. Also, the anti-Polish operation could bring the Banderites a lot of public support as it went hand in hand with the seizure of property. Situations of this kind always trigger a desire for easy profit and robbery among a segment of the population.

If it was the collective leadership that applied its experience in exterminating Jews to its operations against Poles in Sarny and Kostopil counties, then the decision to launch a massive attack on Polish settlements in western Volhynia, where up to that time there had been almost no major killings, was made by Dmytro "Klym Savur" Kliachivskyi himself. Between March and May 1943, he suddenly became the most important partisan commander in Volhynia out of just being one of several Ukrainian underground leaders. The death of Vasyl Ivakhiv meant that no one in the Banderite hierarchy in Volhynia could threaten his position. Difficulties in communicating with the brass in Galicia (where additionally there had just been an internal struggle for leadership) gave him a great deal of leeway in making decisions.

In June 1943 Klym Savur gave the UPA commanders in the western districts of Volhynia an official order concerning the fate of Poles. This fact is confirmed by the testimony of one local UPA commander, Yuriy "Rudy" Stelmashchuk. One of the things he noted was:

In [...] June 1943, I met with Klym Savur [and – G.M.] Adrushchenko, deputy representative of the high command's HQ, in Kolky forest. Savur gave me the order to murder all Poles in Kovel district. [...] I had no right to disobey the order, though my personal convictions did not allow me to follow through. I turned to Andrushchenko, **who told me it was an order not from HQ, but a field diversion** [emphasis – G.M.].⁵

5 Cit. per: Wiktor Poliszczuk, *Nacjonalizm ukraiński w dokumentach – integralny nacjonalizm ukraiński jako odmiana faszyzmu*, p. 2, v. 4, Toronto 2002, p. 475.

Stelmashchuk in this situation tried to appeal directly to OUN-B providnyk Mykola Lebed. In a special letter dated June 24, 1943, we read:

Friend Ruban! I bring to your attention that in June 1943 representative of the Central Provid – UPA commander “Pivnich” “Klym Samur” gave me a secret directive for the total, universal, physical liquidation of the Polish population⁶.

It is not known whether Stelmashchuk got any response (which is rather doubtful since Lebed had just been recalled), but we can be sure he eventually carried out the order.

On May 18, 1943, Klym Savur addressed the Polish population, holding the Poles entirely responsible for the aggravation of ethnic relations in Volhynia and accusing them of joining the police force subordinate to the Germans. The address contained the following appeal: “Poles! Come to your senses! Return home. Those who are serving and helping the Germans today can still turn back [from the wrong path – G.M.], but tomorrow will be too late”⁷.

According to the prominent Ukrainian historian Ihor Ilyushin (who, incidentally, has done much to bring knowledge of the Volhynian massacre closer to the Ukrainian public), this proclamation indicates that the Banderites had decided on an anti-Polish operation only after having been influenced by the actions of the Polish auxiliary police⁸. It is unquestionably difficult to agree with this view. This hypothesis completely ignores the plans for the “deportation” of Poles that are known to us and were prepared by the OUN-B long before the appearance of Polish police formations in Volhynia. Also, and just as importantly, it does not take into account the murders of the Polish population in February-May of 1943, i.e. the period before the issuance of this proclamation by Klym Savur.

Kliachkovskyi's words to the Poles were, in fact, only propaganda. We can assume with a high degree of certainty that the day the proclamation appeared was when the final decision to expand the scope of anti-Polish purges was made. The proclamation was meant to be used to present the victims as the guilty, while the perpetrators of the crimes became in this way avengers of the people, introducing a new, just order.

Here we touch on another problematic issue. Attempts are sometimes made to present the events in Volhynia as a spontaneous popular revolt triggered

6 Cit. per: Władysław Filar, *Wołyń 1939-1944. Eksterminacja czy walki polsko-ukraińskie. Studium historyczno-wojskowe zmagani na Wołyniu w obronie polskości, wiary i godności ludzkiej*, Toruń 2003, pp. 38-39.

7 Cit. per: Ігор Ільющин, *Волинська трагедія 1943-1944 pp.*, Kyiv 2003, pp. 188-189.

8 Ihor Iljuszyn, *UPA i AK. Konflikt w Zachodniej Ukrainie (1939-1945)*, Warsaw 2009, p. 110.

by the long-standing Polish domination. This was clearly expressed by the last UPA commander, Vasyl Kuk:

In the initial period, it was not the UPA initiating the anti-Polish operation; we were dealing with spontaneous action of the Ukrainian population. [...] In the first phase of the conflict in Volhynia, it was not partisan combat operations against Poles but the actions of the Ukrainian population, often armed with axes, scythes, and pitchforks, taking place. This was peasant revenge for years of insults and humiliation. When it turned out that we did not forbid the peasants to carry out such actions against Poles, they took on a mass character⁹.

Analysis of events, however, does not support this version. There is no doubt that the first mass murder of the Polish population in the village of Parośla had an organized quality and was the work of the Banderite OUN. The same is true of all attacks where the identity of the perpetrators was identified. Moreover, one can often observe the opposite situation in cases when the UPA mobilized local populations to attack Polish settlements. For example, in the summer of 1943, members of the UPA gathered Ukrainian men aged sixteen to sixty in the village of Ivanivka, led them to Gaj village and there ordered them to kill the already rounded up Poles waiting over a ditch. For disobeying the order, they threatened with execution. These men had no firearms; their only weapons were axes and pitchforks. Crimes committed by peasants in this manner terrified Poles the most. Undoubtedly, they also triggered "local initiators", who revealed themselves by murdering those trying to escape the conflagration. Therefore, over time, we do actually witness cases of Ukrainian peasants killing Poles on their own initiative. This probably would not have happened without the presence and "encouragement" of the UPA. It seems the goal of the Ukrainian underground was the largest possible participation of the local Ukrainian population in attacks. Without the active involvement of locals, it would have been impossible to speak of an outbreak of a national revolution so eagerly anticipated by the OUN-B.

In June 1943, Klym Savur issued a proclamation to the Ukrainian population. It should be viewed as a continuation of propaganda preparations for the July operation of mass extermination of Poles. The proclamation began with a vivid depiction of the May 1943 pacification of the Ukrainian village Derman-Zaluzhe, which was attributed to Polish police. Kliachkovskyi further accused the Poles of complicity "in German massacres and torture of

9 *Niepodległość jako drogowskaz. Rozmowa z Wasylem Kukiem*, in: *Wiele twarzy Ukrainy. Rozmowy Izy Chruślińskiej i Piotra Tymy*, Lublin 2005, p. 178.

the Ukrainian population” and of collaboration with the Soviet partisans. The proclamation read:

If, therefore, a new Haidamachchyna or Koliivshchyna erupts on Ukrainian soil, responsibility for it will fall solely on those circles that brought Polish liberation policy into the anti-Ukrainian camp of Muscovite and German imperialism, and that currently operate on Ukrainian territory [...] against the Ukrainian people. But let the minions of Moscow and Berlin not forget that the Ukrainian nation is capable of revenge!¹⁰.

¹⁰ Cit. per: *Polacy i Ukraińcy* ..., p. 503.

Anti-Polish Operation in Volhynia – Apogee of the Massacre

9.1 The First Polish Retaliations

Immediately after the first killings, the Polish underground began organizing armed self-defence. It was decided to counteract the mass flight to the cities by creating strong defensive bases “out of a few dozen villages with large Polish populations [...] using fortifications, shooting trenches, and barriers”¹. The Polish underground was weakened however by internal disputes. One party to the conflict was the Delegation, headed by district delegate Kazimierz “Jan Linowski” Banach. The other was the Home Army (AK), commanded in this region by Colonel Kazimierz “Luboń” Bąbiński. Banach’s task was to organize the State Security Committee and citizen guards based on the Delegation’s network, with said guards to be composed of Polish citizens of both Polish and Ukrainian ethnicity. The creation of mixed-nationality guards was part of the open nationality policy pursued by Linowski, whose ultimate goal was the political “disarmament” of Volhynian Ukrainians. Already at the turn of 1942/1943 Banach held numerous talks with pro-Polish Ukrainian activists in Volhynia. He managed to gather a group of about sixty people declaring their willingness to work towards Polish-Ukrainian cooperation. The Volhynian Ukrainian Committee proclamation condemning the murders of Poles, issued right after the attacks began, was likely their contribution.

Colonel Bąbiński was to prepare first and foremost the Volhynian Home Army (to which, as per Grot’s recommendations, only Poles were accepted) to carry out the plan of a general uprising. In his actions, he should have taken into account the Government Delegation’s policy towards Ukrainians. Immediately after the beginning of the anti-Polish operation, a stark conflict arose between the Government Delegation and the Home Army. It is difficult to say what the actual course of the dispute was, as both sides accused each other of similar ineffectiveness in defending the Polish population. Its emotional intensity is evidenced by comments of Home Army officers who foretold that after the war, “civilians” would be hanged for treason, all the while referring to the delegate as “Volks-Bulba”. Banach was accused of creating self-defence units

¹ *Armia Krajowa w dokumentach*, v. 3, Wrocław–Warsaw–Kraków 1990, p. 127.

subordinate to the peasant movement, thus weakening the unity and effectiveness of the AK's actions. The delegate, on the other hand, held it against the AK that instead of concentrating on defending the population it was gathering forces against the Germans with a mind to carry out tasks related to the planned national uprising, an activity not conformed to the situation resulting from the initiation of UPA operations.



Fig. 23
Kazimierz "Luboń" Bąbiński, commander
of Home Army Volhynia District from
July 1942. Photograph from 1938.

The disputes, however, did not end there. They also concerned Banach's attempts to reach an agreement with the Ukrainians. In this respect, he was following General Grot's guidelines, which required seeking ways of defusing the Polish-Ukrainian conflict by political means. He did not abandon these plans even after the anti-Polish operation began. In contrast, AK command in Volhynia was in favour of battling the Ukrainians, not believing in any arrangement after the first wave of killings.

It must be admitted, however, that even in Volhynia in June 1943 one could harbour illusions about further developments. The worst, it seemed, had already passed for the Poles. Within territories engulfed by the inferno, they took refuge in the cities or in self-defence bases, which gave them a sense of relative safety. In the western counties of Volhynia – Volodymyr, Horokhiv,

Kovel, and Liuboml – anti-Polish incidents were relatively rare. Moreover, in March 1943 UPA men reached an agreement with the Poles and formed a guerilla unit in Dominopol under Stanisław (or Celestyna) Dąbrowski, a teacher from Swojczów who had direct contacts with the UPA. One might have imagined that further negotiations would make it possible to stop the wave of atrocities. This is probably also why preliminary talks between the UPA and the Government Delegation could take place on July 7, 1943. The meeting took place near Świnarzyn; its course in no way foretold the tragedy to come. The talks continued on July 10. The Polish side was represented by plenipotentiary of the District Delegation and commander of the Peasant Guard in Volhynia Zygmunt “Krzysztof Poręba” Rumel, and representative of the Volhynian AK Krzysztof “Czart” Markiewicz. They were accompanied by guide and coachman Witold Dobrowolski. The Banderites, however, were no longer interested in negotiating. They murdered the Polish delegates on July 10, 1943, in the village of Kustycze, Kovel county. According to one unconfirmed though probable account, they were tortured to death (torn apart by horses). The following day, as became apparent later, would be one of the most tragic for Poles during World War II.

9.1.1 *July 11-12, 1943*

The OUN-B and UPA's operation in the western districts of Volhynia was to cover – to surprise Poles and thwart any possible attempts at defence – many more localities than in the eastern part of the region as was previously the case. Over the last months, UPA units in this area became stronger and attained greater fighting capabilities than those Dubovyi's units had possessed in March-May. The UPA was also able to take advantage of the experience gained through police deserters. The date of the onslaught was set for Sunday, July 11 to attack Poles gathering in large numbers for mass.

According to the plan, after killing the population of a given village, UPA sotnias were to move quickly to the next village to carry out the next massacre. The intention was to achieve the greatest possible surprise and minimize chances of escape. Only Ukrainian self-defence groups were to stay on spot and “clean” the area. Poles escaping the conflagration were not favoured by the time of year. Summer temperatures made spending nighttime outside feasible, but the short July night did not give the Poles, who literally became game, much time to escape and hide under the cover of darkness.

UPA units struck, as planned, on July 11, 1943. According to Władysław and Ewa Siemaszek's findings, they simultaneously attacked ninety-six villages in Horokhiv and Volodymyr counties and three in Kovel county. The next day, July 12, the same fate befell another fifty villages in Horokhiv and Volodymyr

counties². One of the first villages attacked was Dominopol, where the aforementioned Polish unit maintaining contacts with the UPA was stationed. It was probably liquidated on the night of July 11 by partisans from Porfiryi “Sich” Antoniuk’s *zahon* (regiment) supported by the OUN Security Service militia. This is how one member of the OUN Security Service (SB) purportedly described the action to Danyl Shumuk: “We knocked on the door. The lieutenant [...] opened it for us. We shot him on the doorstep. We shot the captain in bed as the typist jumped out the window and our boys shot her there. Then [...] the SB boys went roaming around the village. Not a single Lakh remained alive by morning”³. About two hundred and twenty Poles were killed. The village was not burned down as the Polish farmsteads were taken over by Ukrainians.

The Gurów colony was attacked on the night of July 10–11 at about 2.30 AM. The inhabitants were dispatched inside individual houses with slashing weapons and firearms. About two hundred Poles were murdered there. At 3 AM, UPA men attacked the Wygranka colony. Inhabitants were awakened by the sounds coming from Gurów, with some seeking out hiding places or fleeing, some trying to defend themselves. Nonetheless, about one hundred and fifty Poles fell victim to the UPA. At around 5 AM tragedy struck the Zamlicze folwark – one hundred and eighteen people were murdered. Approximately another eighty Poles were killed in the Nowiny colony at 8 AM.

In Poryck, UPA units struck when the Poles had gathered in the local church for mass, which started at 11 AM. They shot and threw grenades through the church doors and windows. This is how Jadwiga Krajewska recalled the attack:

The first shots were fired at Father Bolesław Szawłowski and the faithful during the Gloria [...]. I was at church with my sister [...]. When I heard the murderers walking around the church and saying “oh, this one’s still alive” I quickly grabbed some hat soaked in warm, sticky blood and used it to rub my and my sister’s faces. We pretended to be dead. The smoke was very suffocating, so people tried to flee the church, but machine gun fire ended their suffering at the church entrance. [...] The Ukrainians shouted, “come out, whoever’s alive” and killed those exiting at the door [...] attempts were made to blow the church up, but we only felt a terrible shock and then everything fell silent⁴.

While the slaughter in the church was taking place, other groups of partisans killed Poles remaining inside their homes. Attack participant Ivan Hrin later testified that the bodies of “up to 200” dead “were buried next to the Polish church. Residents were assembled to do this, [who – G.M.] dug a large hole

2 Władysław Siemaszko, Ewa Siemaszko, *Ludobójstwo ...*

3 Данило Шумук, *Пережити і передумати*, Kyiv 1998, pp. 131–132.

4 Cit. per: Adam Peretiatkowicz, *Polska samoobrona w okolicach Łucka*, Katowice 1995, p. 204.

at the west side of the building and carried the corpses from inside there. The corpses were buried just 25-30 meters from the church”⁵.

Poles gathered at church were also attacked by UPA men in Chrynów. The church was cordoned off and those leaving the 9 o'clock mass were stopped, while those entering for the 11 o'clock mass were let through. Around this time, machine gun fire opened up on the crowd. Once all those who were shot lay on the ground, the UPA men retreated without killing the wounded, thanks to which some of the fallen survived. Meanwhile, UPA patrols killed Poles inside their homes. About one hundred and fifty people died. Poles were attacked at church in Zabłócce as well. Seventy-six people were murdered there.

Adela Preis (nee Ziółkowska) recalls the events that took place in Kisielin:

After Mass, around 1 PM, bandits burst into the church [...] murdering those inside. They smashed small children against the walls. Some of the congregation hid in the presbytery, including myself, my father, and my brother Stanisław. We went up to the second floor. The first floor was set on fire. The attackers used ladders to get to us. We struck them with bricks we'd attained from dismantling stoves and the walls. My brother [...] was killed by a bullet that hit him directly in the heart. It was fired by a UPA man sitting on the roof of a nearby barn⁶.

Around 10 PM the UPA men left Kisielin – the effect of their operation was the murder of about ninety Poles. Most of those holed up in the presbytery survived.

Tragedy also befell Huta Majdańska in Zdobuniv county. In the spring of 1943, the inhabitants of this village declared their loyalty to the Ukrainian underground and in exchange for a guarantee of safety provided the UPA with food (eggs, milk, grain, meat). Despite this, on July 12 Ukrainian units murdered most of the inhabitants. 184 people died (including one Ukrainian woman). Eleven Poles survived. In the village of Zagaje, UPA men murdered about 260 Poles, in the village of Linów about 70, at Pustomyty about 90. Over those days Poles were also killed in the colonies of Stasin, Milatyń, Michałówka, Pelagin, Romanówka, Samowola, Smołowa, Rykowicze, Szczeniutyn Mały, Szczeniutyn Duży, Wolica, Topieliszczce, Zaskiewiczze Stare, and Zaskiewiczze Nowe, as well as in many other localities.

The night of July 15 and the day of July 16 saw the second wave of attacks. One hundred and one Poles were killed in the village of Pułhany and about fifty in the Szeroka colony (most of them went voluntarily to a clearing by the forest to hide from an alleged German pacification of which the Ukrainians had

5 *Polacy i Ukraińcy ...*, pp. 562-563.

6 Cit. per: *Okrutna przestroga*, eds. Jerzy Dębski, Leon Popek, Lublin 1997, pp. 36-37.

warned them and were shot there). At noon the UPA attacked the village of Kupowalce, which had good relations with local Ukrainians and even supplied the UPA with food. The UPA men entered the village on carts from several directions at once. Poles were killed in their houses and gardens; the cornfields were also “combed” for escapees. A total of about one hundred and fifty people were murdered at that time. That same day at least 87 Poles were killed in the Lulówka Węgierszczyzna colony.

At the turn of July and August, UPA units in this area only rarely attacked Polish villages. One can suspect the intention was to lull the Poles into a false sense of security, which would allow them to launch another concentrated attack. This was also the purpose of a proclamation made by the staff of Sich-Antoniuk's zahon, which declared that the massacres that had just taken place were justified by the need to punish the Poles “with all the severity of wartime-revolutionary demands” for collaboration with the Germans. At the same time, “full security” was guaranteed to that part of the Polish population that did not collaborate with the Germans. Poles were urged “not to succumb to hostile agitation and not to leave their settlements”⁷.

9.2 Successive Assaults by Dubovyi's Units

Throughout July 1943 anti-Polish operations were also conducted by units under Dubovyi in the north-eastern districts of Volhynia province. In this region, UPA sotnias continued attacks on Polish villages, aiming at a complete “cleansing” of the area. Poles mostly coalesced at self-defence bases. Not only did these provide shelter to the population, but also made it difficult for the UPA to move freely in the field. The self-defence bases often carried out confiscations in surrounding Ukrainian villages, thus undermining (albeit not intentionally) the UPA's authority in its own environment. For this reason, Polish outposts also became the main targets of attacks by the Ukrainians.

One of the more important Polish bases was Huta Stepańska, which cooperated with Wyrka, six kilometres to its north. These protected the smaller Polish settlements in the area, whose inhabitants were supposed to evacuate to the main bases in case of danger. The Poles also cooperated with Soviet partisans in organizing raids against the UPA. In late March they attacked Melnytsia Mala, and in April 1943, together with the Soviets, Buteiky. At the beginning of July 1943, the self-defence in Huta numbered five hundred men but had only eighty weapons, including six LMGs. We do not know the number of Wyrka

⁷ *Polacy i Ukraińcy ...*, p. 545.

defenders. There were about five thousand people under the protection of these two centers.

To liquidate the Polish self-defence bases, Dubovyi picked ten UPA and SKW units out of which two strong combat groups were formed. The grouping also included the UPA's "first sotnia" commanded by Yarema. On July 16, around 11 PM, Ukrainian units initiated their synchronous attack.

The first UPA fighting group destroyed one by one the villages of Perespa, Użanie, Soszniki, Hały, Tur, and others. Polish houses were burned, and the captured population was murdered. At 3.25 AM UPA men attacked Wyrka from three sides. The Poles tried defending themselves inside the church and brick buildings surrounding it, but after two hours of combat were pushed back to Huta Stepańska. The remaining neighbouring Polish colonies were destroyed the next day.

Meanwhile, the second UPA group destroyed Borek, Lady, and Kurorty, and then launched a direct attack on Huta Stepańska. Its resident Janina Franuś-Włoszczyńska later recalled: "They attacked our settlement. They surrounded it and started setting fires. The bells tolled in trepidation. Whoever lived started to run to the brick, two-storey school. That was our fortress. They came at us in several attempts and roared "hurra, get the Lakhs!" The dogs were howling. The battle lasted three days"⁸. The strongest onslaught befell Huta on July 18, at 1 AM. One of the assault groups managed to break into the village, set fire to some buildings and kill about a hundred Poles. After a day-long battle, the Polish command decided to evacuate Huta. The Poles formed a column of wagons a few kilometres long, shielded by the self-defence. Taking advantage of the fog, most inhabitants of Huta withdrew to Antonówka. Part of the population, however, taken by panic, broke away from the main group and fell prey to the Banderites. On the morning of July 19, the Ukrainians entered Huta Stepańska and burned all the buildings (blowing up the brick ones).

From the Ukrainians' point of view, the operation was a success. UPA losses numbered 18 dead and 17 wounded but a strong self-defence centre had been eliminated, with (according to Ukrainian data) over five hundred Poles dead in the process. Several or even a dozen Germans from patrols that encountered UPA guards were also killed.

The next target for Dubovyi's units were the Polish settlements near the railroad tracks near Sarny, so far considered relatively safe due to their proximity to German garrisons. A concentrated Ukrainian attack struck Kopaczówka, Kruszewo, Parośla II, Perespa, Terebunie, Kowbań, Krasna Górka, and others on July 30, 1943. Ukrainian partisans shelled the Polish villages, then broke

⁸ Cit. per: *Śladami ludobójstwa na Wołyniu ...*, p. 76.

into houses killing everyone who had not managed to escape. The Poles fled in the direction of the Antonówka railway station, where a German outpost was located. A group of escapees was ambushed not far from it – 28 people were killed. The UPA was not, however, fully successful everywhere. In Wydymer the self-defence fought off attacks throughout the whole night. The assailants retreated around noon, leaving behind the bodies of ten dead. The same occurred in the Choromce colony and Poród. In the latter village, the UPA retreated by morning under German pressure. In total, on July 30, 1943, the UPA killed about one hundred Poles.

The Ukrainians attacked Volodymyrets probably on August 8. Vasyl “Voronyi” Levkovich recalls that “the German garrison was ravaged”, forcing it to leave the town, but he does not mention that it only consisted of six soldiers who barricaded themselves in a brick school⁹. Thirty Ukrainian policemen stationed in the town went over to the partisan side immediately after the attack began. The main thrust of the attack was directed against the Poles, who, warned by good-hearted Ukrainians, managed to hide in the brick church of St. Joseph, where they defended themselves with their four rifles and ... hydrochloric acid (poured on attackers trying to break down the doors). The UPA men, unable to force through the main entrance, blew up the rear wall of the church, killing two Polish women in the process. Fortunately for the Poles, at that moment a German relief force arrived in Volodymyrets, forcing the UPA to abandon the assault and retreat. Once the attack was over, the Germans evacuated their soldiers and the Polish population from the town. The assistance given to Poles by the German authorities in Volhynia, in light of the brutal policies pursued in occupied Poland, may be considered a paradox of those times. However, one should not draw overly far-reaching conclusions from this fact. The Poles were treated by the Germans simply as a certain counterweight to the UPA. Besides, it should not be forgotten that according to international law it was the occupation authorities’ duty to ensure the safety of the civilian population.

9.3 The August Massacres

At the end of August, another massed UPA attack took place in the western districts of Volhynia. In Volodymyr county the unit of one Zuch from Lysyi’s kurin exterminated the village of Ziemlica (about ninety victims) with axes and pitchforks on August 29, 1943. That same day, about fifty partisans supported by peasants armed with small arms attacked the Władysławówka colony and

9 Василь Левкович “Вороний”, *Сторінки...*, p. 24.

murdered 160 Poles. Similarly, 150 Poles were killed in the Grabina colony, 140 in the Jasionówka colony, about 100 in the Słowikówka colony, about 200 in the Sokołówka colony, about 140 in the Soroczyn colony, and 69 in Mogilno.

On the night of August 29, UPA men from Lysyi's kurin surrounded the village of Kąty, murdering the inhabitants inside individual farmsteads. According to different sources, between 180 and 213 people lost their lives. They then attacked the village of Jankowce, where 86-87 Poles were killed. After massacring Poles in both villages, Lysyi's kurin arrived in Ostrówek that same day. After surrounding the village, groups of partisans, going farm to farm, led the Polish families to the school and its yard. Some – mainly women and children – were later directed to the church. The partisans behaved calmly, assuring people that nothing was threatening them. Only those who resisted were killed on the spot. One wounded Polish woman was even bandaged to calm down those in the schoolyard. After assembling all the Poles, the Ukrainians first demanded that they hand over valuables and watches, then began leading the men out one by one. They murdered them in three separate spots, striking them in the back of the head with an axe or mace. The dead were placed in special pits dug for this purpose. An exhumation carried out in 1993, thanks to the efforts of historian Leon Popek, confirmed that most of the victims were killed by blunt force trauma. Around noon German soldiers appeared in the area, prompting the Ukrainians to herd the remaining Poles to the vicinity of the cemetery. There, they proceeded to kill them in groups of 10. Czesław Wasiuk recalled: "Together with my mother I was in the last, incomplete tenth. [...] I saw the first person fall, the second was shot by someone else, while the one who killed the first person went on to kill the third. I was fourth. The thought came to me to pretend to be a corpse. I covered my face and eyes with my hands so as not to prick my face on stubble and dropped alongside the dying. I was afraid the Ukrainians would notice I was alive and finish me off like they did the others. A moment later I fainted. When I woke up, I got up and ran away"¹⁰. Altogether between 476 and 520 people were murdered in Ostrówek.

Another unit of the UPA entered Wola Ostrowiecka on August 30 at 8 AM. Here as well the partisans behaved very politely, trying to lull the Poles' suspicions, offering candies to the children for example. Residents were brought to the schoolyard, where around 10 o'clock they were given a speech calling for common struggle against the Germans. Everyone was then locked inside the school, from where the men were led out, one after another in groups of five to ten, to a barn. There they were killed with axes, hammers, and other

10 Cit. per: *Wołyński testament*, eds. Leon Popek, Tomasz Trusiuk, Paweł Wira, Zenon Wira, Lublin 1997, p. 161.

blunt instruments. At noon the school was covered with straw, doused with gasoline and set on fire, and several grenades were thrown inside. There were 150-200 women and children in the building at the time. A total of 572 to 620 people were massacred. On the same day, UPA men murdered a similar number of people – around 600 – in the colonies of Nowy Gaj and Stary Gaj.

Local UPA commander Yurii Stelmashchuk later described the course of the operation he carried out as follows:

We did it the following way: after gathering all the Polish population in one place, we surrounded it and began slaughtering them. When there was not a single living person left, we dug large holes, threw all the corpses inside, covered them with soil and, to hide any traces of these horrible graves, lit big fires on top and continued on our way. That's how we went from village to village [...]. We collected all the cattle, valuables, property, and food, burning the buildings and other property¹¹.

This is how another partisan, Stepan Redesha, described the events:

We encircled 5 Polish villages and during the night and next day burned these villages slaughtering all inhabitants old and young – over two thousand people in total. [...] We threw many Poles – men, women, old people, and children – alive into wells, and then finished them off with gunfire. Those remaining we stabbed with bayonets, killed with axes and shot. We did all this under the slogan “murder the Polish nobility flooding onto Ukrainian lands”¹².

This, of course, does not constitute all cases of massacres on Poles. In the summer of 1943, a merciless hunt for anyone with Polish roots was unleashed in Volhynia. In mixed-nationality families, forced killings of closest kin occurred. The partisans would slaughter the entire family if its one Ukrainian member refused to do so. OUN Secret Service militias sometimes even killed those who had become so deeply rooted in Ukrainian society that their neighbours were surprised to learn of their Polish roots. The Poles could feel safe only within cities and self-defence bases; wherever the influence of the OUN-B and UPA reached, death loomed.

According to estimates by Władysław and Ewa Siemaszko, between July and August of 1943 around eight hundred villages were attacked in total, with almost twenty thousand Poles losing their lives¹³. In the course of some of

11 *Wyciąg z protokołu przesłuchania Jurija Stelmaszczuka z 28 lutego 1945 roku*, in: *Polacy i Ukraińcy ...*, p. 443.

12 *Polacy i Ukraińcy ...*, pp. 414-415.

13 Władysław Siemaszko, Ewa Siemaszko, *Ludobójstwo ...*, pp. 1045-1046. Details of attacks on pp. 121, 123-138, 158-159, 338-339, 346-347, 367-380, 393-399, 400, 490-495, 502-511, 513-521,

these anti-Polish liquidations, similarities to earlier anti-Jewish operations can be discerned, including the use of psychological manipulation (i.e. the aforementioned distribution of candy to Polish children summoned to a “meeting”). Many victims fell at the hands of groups of so-called axemen, that is, mobilized peasants armed with axes or pikes. UPA units and OUN Security Service militias were also often equipped with axes and bayonets. People were killed in this way mainly due to the lack of firearms and desire to save ammunition, but also to conceal the intention of massacres so that more people could be caught during an attack. There were numerous cases of degenerate cruelty and sadistic executions; many accounts mention, for example, the impaling of small children on fence posts (as if on stakes), the cutting off of breasts, noses, tongues, and limbs, and sawing victims in half. Bodies were left in the fields, thrown into wells or cesspits, or buried in specially dug pits. Sometimes the massacred corpses were displayed for public viewing.

Jerzy Krasowski recalls:

At the first homestead, we came upon a shocking scene, the image of a couple-year-old boy impaled on a sharp post by the gate. On the fence was the inscription “Litak Sikorskoho” [Sikorski’s airplane – G.M.]. At the doorstep of the house lay the corpses of a man and two women cruelly chopped up with an axe¹⁴.

In the memoirs of Wincenty Romanowski we read in turn:

After a pogrom in one of the villages near Derażne, a small child was found in a hut with its entrails ripped out. The intestines were spread out over the wall in some irregular fashion, and on one of the nails hung a piece of paper with the inscription “Poland from sea to sea”¹⁵.

One can only speculate whether these and similar macabre “images” were designed to provoke terror among the surviving Poles and to vent feelings of humiliation, anger, and hatred that had lain dormant for years. Perhaps, in this horrifying manner, the Banderites also wanted to convince the Ukrainian peasantry of the powerlessness of the Polish state, whose government-in-exile – though internationally recognized – was unable to help its citizens.

731-734, 737-738, 743-747, 750, 799, 802-803, 817-820, 822-839, 850-853, 860, 862-868, 870-906, 930-931, 939-942, 946-947.

14 Jerzy Krasowski, *Wspomnienia Wołyniaka*, neither date nor place information for publication available, p. 84.

15 Wincenty Romanowski, *Kainowe dni*, Warsaw 1990, p. 78.

Polish Defence and Retaliation

Slaughters of the Polish population caused that even the Poles in Volhynia who were most sympathetic to Ukrainian aspirations ceased to believe in the possibility of compromise. This is well illustrated by the memoirs of Wincenty Romanowski, who wrote:

I had many true friends among the Ukrainians, but my experiences and observations throughout [...] 1943 convinced me I could trust no one. I decided not to shake hands with anyone. After all, anyone could have the life and blood of my brothers on their conscience¹.

The massacres of July 11, 1943, prompted Kazimierz Banach and Lieutenant Colonel Kazimierz Bąbiński to work together. On July 19 they jointly gave the order to merge the State Security Corps and civil administration with the army. The next day the AK command decided to immediately create partisan units, which were to be combat-ready by July 28. Per the order, nine Home Army Partisan Units (OP AK) were formed, with an estimated number of about a thousand men. Thanks to their high mobility, they were able to support the self-defence bases in moments of crisis and at the same time surprise the Ukrainians and bring down precise strikes on them.

On July 28, 1943, District Government Delegate Kazimierz Banach addressed the inhabitants of Volhynia with an appeal calling on Poles to “think intelligently and act with composure”, since “the fight is not about who among us will die or save his life – the fight is about the wholeness and greatness of the Republic of Poland, about the endangered [...] centuries-old Polish heritage of this place”. He appealed to all Poles, both men and women, to join the ranks of the self-defence. He called for self-reliance and boycotts of labour deportations to the Reich organized by the occupation authorities. In his appeal, he accused the Germans and Soviets of provoking fratricidal infighting. He also stated categorically:

Under no circumstances should one cooperate with a German. Joining the German militia and gendarmerie is the most serious crime against the Polish Nation. Militiamen – Poles, who would take part in destroying homesteads and in murdering Ukrainian women and children, will be crossed out of the ranks

1 Wincenty Romanowski, *Kainowe dni*, Warsaw 1990, pp. 87–88.

of the Polish Nation and severely punished. [...] Cooperation with a Bolshevik is a crime equal to cooperation with a German. Joining Soviet partisan units is a crime. No Pole may find himself in one².

Yet, the situation was so dramatic that the Polish population could not take any such appeals seriously. The only rational solution seemed to either be to flee, or to organize self-defence in cooperation with anyone who could provide weapons. Aware of the tragic situation of Volhynia's inhabitants, Banach postulated supplying them with weapons and ammunition from central Poland, as well as transferring to the area a dozen or so partisan companies well-armed with machine guns. The authorities of Underground Poland were unable to fulfill the delegate's request. Only a handful of officers appeared in Volhynia alongside one unit in March of 1944, the so-called Warsaw company, with a strength of a few dozen men.

As of September 1, 1943 (after the largest wave of massacres), the Polish underground estimated the Polish population at 170,000 concentrated in 11 district towns and 25 defence bases. The latter were particularly exposed to the relentless attacks of the Ukrainian nationalists. The largest Polish self-defence base in Volhynia was undoubtedly Przebraże, with a population of 1,150 in 1938. As early as March 1943, the local community set up night guards; they also obtained permission from Kreislandwirt Kiwerc Jeske to set up self-defence. Nevertheless, at the turn of April and May 1943, UPA men killed eighteen defenceless Przebraż inhabitants on their way to market in an ambush near Ostrów.

On April 20, 1943, Henryk "Harry" Cybulski was granted leadership over the self-defence, which turned out to be the best course of action. A forester by profession, he was deported deep into the USSR in 1940. He would escape, and described his breakout in these words:

On a bright July evening, I said goodbye to my colleagues. Endowed by them with a few slices of bread, armed with a knife, I plunged into the taiga. Within the Arctic Circle, orientation according to the sun and stars became unreliable and useless. Intuition was key. I walked [...] fifty to sixty kilometres a day. Hunger plagued me. I was unsure if I was going in the right direction [...]. I longed to encounter people yet feared them. And so, after eight weeks of an immense march, I turned up in my home village at midnight³.

2 Archiwum Adam Bienia. Akta narodowościowe (1942-1944), eds. Jan Brzeski, Adam Roliński, Kraków 2001, p. 111.

3 Henryk Cybulski, *Czerwone noce*, Warsaw 1990, pp. 10-11.

After the outbreak of war between the Germans and Soviets, Cybulski returned to his work as a forester, simultaneously becoming involved in the underground. He moved to his hometown of Przebraż immediately after the first attacks, where, on his initiative, the strength of the Polish defence quickly increased to four companies (about 500 men). Thousands of Polish refugees came under their protection. In total, about ten thousand people found shelter in Przebraż. The self-defence maintained contact with surrounding Polish villages, including Rafałówka, Hermanówka, and Komarówka.

The defenders of Przebraż also undertook offensive actions, organizing raids on neighbouring Ukrainian villages where UPA units were concentrated. On June 5 Omelno was attacked, and a short time after – to support the UPA-threatened self-defence in Rafałówka – the village of Hawczyce, where “a considerable part of the group was shattered, the rest retreating into the surrounding forests”⁴. To obtain medicines, a raid was in turn organized on a pharmacy in Trostianets.

UPA command decided to strike Przebraż in early July 1943. The intent was probably to destroy the Polish population around Przebraż first, only then moving on to liquidate the self-defence base itself. On July 4-5, the glow of fires appeared in the vicinity of Przebraż. UPA units marching towards the settlement killed 24 Poles in Czołnica Nowa, 61 in Dermanka, and over 20 in Marianówka. In the attack on Wólka Kotowska, members of the self-defence made it possible for some inhabitants to escape thanks to a desperate resistance – over forty people died, nonetheless. Polish farmsteads were also burned, in the colonies of Adamów I and II, Balarka, Dobra, Chmielówka, Tworzymierz, and Zagajnik among others. Ukrainian attacks that night were, however, repulsed by the self-defence forces in Rafałówka and Komarówka. In total, about twenty villages around Przebraż were burned down, with 550 Poles killed. Ukrainian casualties were two dead and six wounded.

On July 5, around 11 AM, UPA men assaulted the self-defence of Przebraż. The village was shelled with mortar fire. Clashes lasted until the afternoon. Killed were ten Poles and one UPA man, while another was seriously wounded. The attack was possibly personally commanded by Klym Savur.

On July 12 the Poles attacked Trostianets, routing the UPA's NCO school there. The village was partially burned down, and its Ukrainian inhabitants were ordered to move further away. On July 31 clashes took place once again, this time with Ukrainians attacking Poles out harvesting crops in the surrounding (also Ukrainian) fields. After an exchange of fire that lasted several hours, the Ukrainians withdrew.

4 *Ibidem*, p. 106.

The UPA attacked Przebraż again on August 31, gathering considerable forces to destroy the village. Fortunately for the defenders, an AK unit commanded by Zygmunt “Olgierd” Kulczycki and a group of Soviet partisans led by Nikolai Prokopiuk came to their aid in time. Thanks to this the Ukrainians were defeated.

On October 2, 1943, two hundred members of the Przebraż self-defence, alongside Soviet partisans, attacked the village of Omelno. They first targeted it with machine gun and mortar fire, causing numerous fires, then launched their assault. At least ten Ukrainians were killed, and over a dozen cattle were taken from the village. On the night of October 15, 1943, the UPA attacked Przebraż for the final time, and once again the attack proved ineffective. On November 25 the self-defence of Przebraż made a successful raid on the Ukrainian village of Zhuravychi to capture flour, grain, and cattle.

Another strong self-defence base was the outpost in Pańska Dolina. Permission for the creation of self-defence in this village was given by Kreislandwirt Wilhelm Schneider. The UPA attacked Pańska Dolina for the first time on June 22, 1943, but the Poles managed to repulse the onslaught. On August 5 the Ukrainians made another attempt to capture the village – it was surrounded by a UPA kurin supported by three 75 mm guns. “In our minds,” recalls one of the UPA commanders, Maksym Skorupskyi, “we could already see the ruins of the Polish buildings”⁵. Fortunately for the defenders, after firing a few shots the Ukrainian guns fell silent, it is difficult to say whether due to being in a poor technical condition or having an unskilled crew. Without artillery support, the UPA was unable to break through the Polish defences. “Pańska Dolina was indeed a fortress”⁶, stated Skorupskyi. Regardless, on September 22, 1943, Ukrainian troops unexpectedly attacked the village in the forenoon, hoping for a surprise effect. The self-defence forces repulsed the attack, nonetheless.

Occasionally Polish bases were spared by happy coincidence. At the beginning of September 1943, the UPA decided to attack the self-defence in Zasmyki with a large force. During the concentration, Ukrainian units encountered Germans, which led to a battle near Radovychi. Both Ukrainians and Germans suffered heavy losses in the battle. The UPA was forced to abandon the attack and order a retreat.

The base in Huta Stara is also worth mentioning. A self-defence force was formed around this village in the spring of 1943 out of a dozen Polish villages in the Zaslucze region. In July, Soviet partisans killed the base’s commander,

5 Максим Скорупський, *Туди...*, p. 148.

6 *Ibidem*.

Lieutenant Osiecki, forcing the self-defence to transform into the Soviet Felix Dzerzhinsky unit. On August 15, 1943, the base's defences were reinforced by the arrival of an AK unit commanded by Captain Władysław "Bomba" Kochański. In mid-November 1943 Dubovyi staged a larger operation against the Huta Stara base. When the UPA attacked on November 16, they encountered strong resistance from the Polish defence and all their attempts to capture the village collapsed under MG fire. A unit of Soviet partisans commanded by Kotlarev also joined the fight, prompting the UPA to retreat. It was one of the greatest Polish successes in the fight against the UPA. The Poles lost only a few men, while on the Ukrainian side there were as many as 54 killed and over 40 wounded. It should be added that in retaliation, retreating UPA soldiers killed fifteen Poles in the Bielczakowska colony.

After the battle Captain Kochański behaved respectably, ordering eleven wounded UPA men to be treated and sending them on carts to the village of Gubkiv on the Sluch River, which was friendly towards the Banderites. According to Wincenty Romanowski, "this was the only known case of the Banderites respecting the goodwill of the Poles: the convoy returned to base without hindrance"⁷.

Similar self-defence bases were created and repulsed attacks of Ukrainian partisans with great determination in Beresteczko, Rybcza, Rożyszcze, Różyn Truskoty, Ostróg, Rafałówka, and others. The results of their actions were assessed by AK commander General Tadeusz Komorowski thusly: "The self-defence operation, which was carried out intensively, has given [...] positive results. The hostile activity of Ukrainian bands, and foremost UPA units, has quieted down a bit. Thanks to the energetic and organized stance of the population and the self-defence operation, the extermination of the Polish element in Volhynia District was prevented, thus laying the groundwork for accomplishing the district's basic combat assignments"⁸.

The AK partisan units supporting self-defence units in battle often undertook offensive actions. In the area of Kupiczów-Zasmyki, the unit commanded by Lieutenant Władysław "Jastrząb" Czermiński attacked Grushivka on August 31, killing about twenty Ukrainians and losing one man in the process. When in September the UPA killed about thirty Poles in the village of Równo in Kovel county, the unit of Lieutenant Kazimierz "Kord" Filipowicz burned the Ukrainian portion of the village in retaliation. On September 7 in Bołtuny colony, the same unit broke Voron's sotnia. Seventeen Ukrainians were killed,

7 Wincenty Romanowski, *ZWZ-AK na Wołyniu 1939-1944*, Lublin 1993, p. 182.

8 Armia Krajowa w dokumentach, v. 3, Wrocław-Warsaw-Kraków-Gdańsk-Lódź 1990-1991, p. 348.



Fig. 24 Start of a summer infant-school in Huta Stara, Volhynia, 1938.

including the sotnia commander. Finally, on October 5 the combined detachments of Kord and Jastrząb burned down villages Polapy and Sokil. These were not the only attacks against Ukrainian villages carried out by these units at that time: Opalin, Lysniaky, Osichnyk, and Vysotsk were also raided.

The Poles also carried out numerous individual executions of Ukrainians whom they suspected of being nationalist sympathizers, with the AK also carrying out such actions in towns. According to clandestine officer Major Waclaw Kopisto, in Luts'k "the following people were sentenced: chief of Ukrainian police Redka [...] attorney Cheremko in front of his villa on Trynitar'ska Street [...] deputy mayor of Skorobogatów, who despite being seriously wounded escaped with his life. The execution of archbishop Polikarp [Sikorskyi, an Orthodox archbishop – G.M.] was abandoned for humanitarian reasons due to his advanced age"⁹.

Here we touch upon the delicate issue of how Polish units behaved towards the Ukrainian civilian population. Władysław and Ewa Siemaszko, in their acclaimed work on the Volhynian massacre in which they meticulously reconstruct the losses of the Polish population, emphatically state that reprisals were rare (giving a figure of only 113 Ukrainians killed) and that the victims "were mostly UPA members, i.e. participants in attacks on Poles"¹⁰. In their opinion, orders from the Polish brass permitted only UPA members to be killed. However, in light of available sources, the number of Ukrainian victims given by them should be considered decidedly incomplete – something that the authors themselves, it seems, were aware of. They mention, for example, that the self-defence from Rożyszcz burned down the Ukrainian village of Swozy in response to attacks originating from it but immediately add: "It is not known whether there were any victims among the Ukrainians"¹¹. Meanwhile, from the testimony of a member of the Polish self-defence we learn something different:

Both I and everyone else at the time did not determine who was in front of us – women or men. We saw it was coming from the v[illage] of Swozy and executed without thinking. We took revenge. [...] In addition to the 26 men and women we killed during the attack on the v[illage] of Swozy, about 60 huts were burned by us, the attackers. In total, there were perhaps 100 huts in this village. We took all possessions and property from the burned huts – cows, horses, pigs, grain, and so on. All this went to the German gendarmerie in Rożyszcze¹².

9 Waclaw Kopisto, *Droga cichociemnego do łagrów Kołymy*, Warsaw 1990, p. 114.

10 Władysław Siemaszko, Ewa Siemaszko, *Ludobójstwo ...*, p. 1074.

11 *Ibidem*, p. 558.

12 State Archive of the Security Service of Ukraine (DA SBU), Łuck, archival unit 1113, pp. 78-88, Excerpt from interrogation protocol of M. Maciążek from 15 April 1944.

In January 1944, the self-defence from Rożyszcze burned another village, Trostianska, killing about thirty Ukrainians.

Also, according to AK soldier Leon Karłowicz, in Volhynia “from the very beginning the principle was adopted that one fights only with Banderites armed with rifles or **other instruments of crime** [emphasis – G.M.]”¹³. Here is how he described the requisitioning action in Lovyshcha:

One barn caught fire, then another. The flames exploded. The structures, which were not built close together, prevented the fire from spreading to the entire village. [...] It is to the nationalists and murderers [...] to whom the peaceful inhabitants of Lovyshcha owe what is currently transpiring. We felt sorry for those fleeing to the woods with their meagre possessions, for the innocent children freezing outside, but it was not Poles who created this harsh reality. And how many of those who were now requisitioning swine had recently lost everything¹⁴.

In another of his books, Karłowicz describes an execution proving not only armed individuals were killed:

When we approached Ukrainian villages, we were strictly forbidden to speak Polish. We pretended to be from their units. [...] Once, while passing a village inhabited by Ukrainians [...] a Ukrainian youngster aged about fifteen came up to us and began begging us to take him along. He wanted to join the Ukrainian Insurgent Army. Lieutenant Jastrząb looked at the boy with hatred and when the boy [...] did not cease demanding a weapon, he talked briefly with the other officers, then nodded at Sztacheta and Kruk I think [...] who grabbed the would-be butcher by the collar and marched him ahead of them. – Come on! You’ll get what you deserve! – one of the men shouted. I looked away, seeing the horror on the Ukrainian boy’s face. [...] He was led away into some deep shrubbery. Soon I thought I heard something like a handclap. [...] In any case, those who had escorted him soon caught up with us already in march, but without the volunteer. No “kill the Lakhs” slogans accompanied us¹⁵.

Extremely valuable information is provided by the memoirs of another AK soldier, Olgierd Kowalski, which read:

The retaliation was to be carried out in the village of Klusk, where all the men we encountered between the ages of 16 and 60 were to be shot. The very fact of retaliating with terror for terror seemed to me fully justified and purposeful [...]. Compared to the bestiality of the Ukrainian nationalists and the ruthlessness of

13 Leon Karłowicz, *Jastrzębiacy. Historia oddziału i batalionu por. “Jastrzębia” w 27 Wołyńskiej Dywizji Piechoty Armii Krajowej*, Lublin 1999, p. 59.

14 *Ibidem*, p. 60.

15 Leon Karłowicz, *Od Zasmyk do Skrobowa*, Opole 1994, pp. 149-150.

the repressive acts carried out by the Germans, the planned sanctions, though draconian, were acceptable to us – no one asked us our opinion either way¹⁶.

Although no executions were carried out in the village of Klusk itself as its inhabitants fled, Kowalski's memoirs clearly show that this order remained in force until the very end of operations. Moreover, some soldiers went above and beyond, as evidenced by the description of the AK attack on Stavky village in March 1944: "When we were shot at in this village, I was one of the first to approach the nearest hut [...] I called on the inhabitants to leave the house. Two women exited. I was glad it was not men [...]. Suddenly, "J." ran up to "my" women and killed them with close-quarter shots to the head. I felt complicit in this unnecessary death"¹⁷. Kowalski's information is indirectly confirmed by Wincenty Romanowski (also an AK soldier), who admits that "men captured without weapons were not spared either". He also states: "The massacres, robberies, and pillaging were answered with armed reprisals, killings, requisitions, and robberies. Killing was considered a virtue. Young men who had lost entire families recorded their victims with a stylus on their rifle butts. Human justice descended to the brink of animal vengeance. Under the influence of universal conflagration, only the officers did not lose their dignity"¹⁸. One report by Kazimierz Banach provides more evidence. From it, we learn of the burning of Ukrainian villages Kleczkowice and Turovychi, as well as the killing of random Ukrainians.

Polish historians, who in this context write about the humane conduct of combat and the categorical prohibition of retaliation targeting civilians, refer to the order of District Commander Colonel "Luboń". In it we read:

I recommend fighting Ukrainian groups with all ruthlessness and severity, especially in retaliatory actions for the slaughter of entire Polish families. There is no mercy and no leniency for murderers of women and children. [...] Let us not retaliate in combat by murdering Ukrainian women and children. I repeat, most categorically, the recommendations and orders given orally at briefings to inspectors and commanders of partisan detachments, that is, **not to allow harm to be done to a Ukrainian woman or child during or after a battle** [emphasis – G.M.]. I will hold accountable commanders and soldiers who would go so far as to commit such unworthy acts with all severity. Issuing these rigours of combat, I am guided not only by humanitarian considerations but also the highest ideal of maintaining the morale of our units, of each soldier¹⁹.

16 Olgierd Kowalski, *Z Wołynia przez Polesie do Berlina. Wspomnienia żołnierza 27 Wołyńskiej Dywizji Piechoty AK*, Bydgoszcz 2005, p. 30.

17 *Ibidem*, p. 32.

18 Wincenty Romanowski, *ZWZ-AK na Wołyniu ...*, pp. 181-183.

19 Cit. per: Władysław Filar, *Wołyń 1939-1944...*, p. 220.

In the quoted order, as is apparent, not a word is given about sparing the lives of unarmed men. It calls solely for leaving women and children be (or rather, considering the extent of UPA crimes, even goes so far as to do so). This speaks in favour of the truthfulness of Kowalski's words about giving orders – at least in some units – to kill men. Another thing is that, if this was indeed the case, the Polish command faced an unsolvable dilemma. Polish populations were subjected to severe terror and the desire to retaliate must have seemed normal and obvious to many. After the horrific crimes witnessed by soldiers, limiting their desire for revenge to those who potentially wielded a weapon may have seemed the psychologically only acceptable course. These orders seem to have also been accepted by soldiers themselves. There were indeed individual murders of women, but it should also be emphasized that alongside these were cases of releasing men deemed harmless to the partisans or at least not responsible for crimes committed against the Polish population.

A separate problem is the requisitions in Ukrainian villages, generally accepted by Poles. These were regarded simply as the taking back of possessions previously looted from the Polish population. The operation in Solatvina, the purpose of which was to conduct a requisition and thus obtain supplies, was described by Roman Kucharski:

One by one the thatched roofs of huts and barns caught fire, and after a quarter of an hour, the whole village was aflame. We permit the civilian population to leave the village, while those caught with weapons are executed by a firing squad. We capture horses, organize horse-drawn carts, and load onto them the already slaughtered pigs, cows, and supplies of flour, groats, salt, along with other necessities found in the pantries. "He who is stronger will not hunger". Indeed ...²⁰.

Requisitions at the beginning of January 1944 were described by Olgierd Kowalski:

Everything was requisitioned. Soldiers shot pigs in their sties and dragged them out onto the road. Special labour (civilian) brigades loaded them onto carts. Everything was loaded, grain, flour, salt, groats, whatever was happened upon. Herds of cattle followed the wagons. I was shocked by the "official" and individual greed. I subconsciously felt that something was wrong here. [...] The spiral of injustice that had been set in motion continued²¹.

20 Roman Kucharski, *Krwawa łuna*, Warsaw 1997, p. 48.

21 Olgierd Kowalski, *Z Wofynia ...*, pp. 31-32.

The Red Insurgency

Russia's experiences in the war of 1812 against Napoleon Bonaparte and the civil war of 1917-1921 demonstrated to the Communists that guerrilla warfare is an effective form of combat. Immediately following Germany's attack on the USSR, they thus began organizing partisan groups in territories captured by the Wehrmacht. In May 1942 the Central Headquarters of the Partisan Movement (TsShPD) was established, to which the partisan staffs of individual republics were subordinated. It was headed by Panteleimon Ponomarenko, the first secretary of the Communist (Bolshevik) Party of Belarus. Subordinate to him was, among others, the Ukrainian Headquarters of the Partisan Movement (USHPD) headed by NKVD General Timofei Strokach. It is worth noting that the TsShPD and its staff were subordinated neither to the army intel's reconnaissance groups nor specially tasked NKVD units.

In Volhynia and Eastern Galicia, conditions for partisan activity were particularly challenging for the Soviets. The 1939-1941 occupation was too fresh in people's minds for the Communists to have much popular support. One of the first Soviet guerrilla units in Volhynia was Colonel Dmitry Medvedev's NKVD group, airdropped into the forests around Rivne on June 20, 1942. It reported directly to HQ in Moscow. Apart from organizing an intelligence network, it carried out many assassination attempts on German notables. Its direct accomplice was Nikolai Kuznetsov, who posed as a German officer (he would die in 1944 in a clash with the UPA).

At the turn of 1942 and 1943, numerous Soviet partisan units appeared in Volhynia, including a substantial concentration under Sydor Kovpak. In the swampy areas of Polesia and northern Volhynia, the partisans established insurgent republics where they liquidated the occupant's administration and installed their own. Simultaneously, first stronger patrols followed by larger and larger units moved south and west, scouting the area and carrying out diversionary and intel activities. The Soviets were primarily interested in developing an insurgency against the Germans, so the majority of their combat operations were directed against them. They attached particular importance to railway sabotage. Seeking allies in their fight against the Germans, they established contacts with both Poles and Ukrainians. At the same time, however, they considered Polish and Ukrainian "nationalists" to be their enemies, for this reason, among others, compiling lists of individuals who supported the Germans, ZWZ-AK, OUN, or UPA, for later use by the NKVD.

The question of Soviet provocation, which allegedly led to massacres of the Polish population in the eastern territories of the Second Polish Republic, should be discussed here. According to this theory, the Polish-Ukrainian conflict was ignited by Soviet partisans who, pretending to be members of the UPA, committed the first killings of Polish populations. These alleged Soviet actions were to provoke Polish retaliation, which in turn forced the UPA to react. This hypothesis, at one time often quoted by Ukrainian authors, is not confirmed by any sources and should therefore be strongly rejected. Among the hundreds of attacks on Polish towns, not a single case can be attributed to the Soviets. In every case (see the Parośla massacre) where the identity of the perpetrators could be established, they turned out to be Banderites.

In February 1943, the guerilla and propaganda war between the UPA and Soviet partisans began. In UPA-controlled areas, the Soviets could move only in large formations or with extreme caution. Both sides acted ruthlessly towards each other. Between May 20 and August 1, 1943, Ivan Fyodorov's unit conducted two raids in Volhynian areas "infected" by the UPA to "eliminate nationalist centres", killing 163 Ukrainian nationalists. Such liquidations of persons accused of nationalist sympathies occurred frequently¹. On named lists of the executed, among the charges put against the victims, we can find such terms as "scout", "distributor of nationalist literature", "participant in fights against partisans", or simply "active nationalist". The Soviets must have realized how weak the grounds for their sentences were, given that "after liberation" they demanded that sentences be officially confirmed before placing the families of such victims on deportation lists.

The UPA cruelly murdered captured Soviet partisans, though captured UPA men could neither count on mercy. One Soviet partisan unit commander, Mikołaj Kunicki, a Pole by origin, described the fate of a captured group of nationalists as follows: "Following interrogation [...] I sentenced the platoon leader to death and torture, while the rest got death by hanging"². At another point in his memoirs, he states: "We would bring unexploded bombs [...] to the middle of a clearing, line the tree boundary with partisans, and push the UPA prisoners out into the clearing, who would then have to screw off the fuzes"³. In turn, Fanny Sołomian-Łoc, who worked at a partisan field hospital, recalled:

1 Central Archive of Social Organizations of Ukraine (TsDAHOU), c. 68, d. 1, v. 1, pp. 140-141, Report of Ivan Fiodorov.

2 Mikołaj Kunicki, *Pamiętnik "Muchy"*, Warsaw 1959, p. 67.

3 *Ibidem*, p. 65.

“Ukrainians were my ‘guinea pigs’ on whom I performed my first minor surgeries. [...] The rule was: cure the prisoner, then kill him”⁴.

Most of the operations against “nationalists” were directed against the Ukrainian underground in 1943 by units under the UShPD, though the Polish underground was not forgotten. The reluctant attitude of the Soviets toward the Poles was particularly evident in the northeastern lands of the Second Polish Republic. At the end of February of that year, Panteleimon Ponomarenko ordered local partisans to carry out activities aimed at incorporating western Belarus into the USSR. As a result, in late April and early May, attacks on Polish conspirators in the Novogrudok region began. In the following months, a kind of Polish-Soviet partisan war unfolded in this area.

The situation differed in Volhynia. By 1942, Polish communists, including Józef Sobiesiak, Jan Burzyński, and Robert Satanowski, began forming a pro-communist underground and insurgency in this region. After the appearance of Soviet units, Sobiesiak and Burzyński’s groups joined their ranks. Satanowski put forward the idea of establishing a Polish communist partisan section in Volhynia at the turn of 1942/1943.

The Polish communists’ conception produced significant resistance within Soviet brass, but in early 1943 Ponomarenko proposed that Polish partisan units be formed and moved to the GG. Ponomarenko wrote that “apart from its military impact, this would also mean that the Poles would not be able to retain their full strength [to fight against the USSR – G.M.]”⁵.

As a result, the Tadeusz Kościuszko unit, commanded by Robert Satanowski, was formed in February 1943. According to a letter written by Satanowski, the purpose of the group’s activities was to “draw the Polish masses into an active fight against the occupants hand in hand with Soviet partisan units”. The commander also promised “to infiltrate the nationalist organizations [i.e. the AK – G.M.] to scout their intentions and activities and to break up their ranks. The Red Polish partisan unit will be a trusted clandestine-reconnaissance unit on Polish territory”⁶. The political character of the unit is well reflected in its “Proclamation to the whole Polish nation” adopted at a unit meeting on May 1, 1943, issued in connection to the breaking of diplomatic relations between the Polish government in London and the USSR and signed by the group’s command headed by Satanowski. The proclamation saw the accusation of the

4 Fanny Solomian-Łoc, *Getto i gwiazdy*, Warsaw 1993, p. 122.

5 Bogdan Musiał, *Memorandum Pantelejmona Ponomarienki z 20 stycznia 1943 roku “O zachowaniu się Polaków i niektórych naszych zadaniach”*, in: “Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość. Pismo Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej” no. 1: 2006, p. 385.

6 TsDAHOU, c. 62, d. 1, v. 1623, pp. 54-55.

Soviets being behind the murders of Polish officers in Katyn' as a fabrication and provocation, with Sikorski's government being described as "fascist". It reads:

At a time when our heroic Russian brothers shed blood on the battlefields, Sikorski's government [...] has gone over to the camp of the enemy of all mankind – fascism [...], thus ceasing to be the government of the Polish nation – rather: Sikorski's government has become enemy to the Polish nation⁷.

Satanowski's unit did not initially enjoy much popularity among local Poles. By May 1, 1943, only forty-three people had joined up. The partisans operated mainly in Stolin and Sarny counties, conducting small combat operations. It was only after the UPA started its anti-Polish campaign that the number of Poles in communist partisan ranks began to swell, eventually reaching five to seven thousand people. On August 15, 1943, Grouping No. 3 was formed, consisting of four units: the Tadeusz Kosciuszko, "Death to Fascism", Wanda Wasilewska, and Romuald Traugutt sections. The last two units were composed of refugees from Huta Stepańska destroyed by UPA in July 1943. In September of the same year, this "Polish" grouping attempted – as per its original plan – to transfer to the GG but was thwarted by a typhus epidemic that broke out among the partisans.

Poles could also be found in other communist partisan units. The Soviets formed a Polish unit named after Feliks Dzierzhinsky within the Ivan Shytov grouping. It included self-defence groups from Kostopol county. Yet another unit (also bearing the name of T. Kosciuszko) was formed in Kamień Koszyrski county. It functioned as part of Ivan Shubitidze's brigade associated with the Belarusian Headquarters of the Partisan Movement.

All of these units remained in Volhynia and Polesia until 1944, engaging in smaller and larger skirmishes with the UPA and the Germans. They protected the local Polish population effectively, though also (at least occasionally) carried out retaliatory actions against Ukrainians. For example, in response to the killing of several partisans on December 18, 1943, the T. Kosciuszko unit (from Szubitidze's brigade), supported by the Soviets, attacked Lakhvychi. The local OUN militia withdrew from the village, laying down small arms cover fire. The Ukrainian report reads: "The Reds robbed the inhabitants, burned half the village, killed 25 people, wounded 15, and took 10 with them"⁸. This is confirmed

7 Cit. per: *Поляки на Волині у роки Другої світової війни*, ред. Володимир Сергійчук, Київ 2003, pp. 138-139.

8 TsDAVOVU, c. 3833, d. 1, v. 115, p. 3. Information from Brzeski i Kobryński from 21 September till the end of 1943. LT Mieczysław Juchniewicz, *Polacy ...*, pp. 260-261.

by the memories of Fanny Sołomian-Łoc, a participant in the operation: “we left on requisitioned wagons, full of war plunder: linen, sheets, towels, shirts, etc. We drove off all the cattle and horses”⁹.

Individuals within the units subordinated to the Soviets were subjected to ideological treatment. One Polish report assessed the situation as follows: “Poles are readily accepted by the partisans and are cared for by the politruk. However, those Poles that are considered to be ‘Sikorski’s nationalists’ are mercilessly murdered. The latter include the entire intelligentsia”¹⁰. One AK partisan unit commander, Lieutenant Jan “Drzazga” Rerutko, died by communist hands for example. The Soviets, attempting to force the self-defence of Stara Huta to transform into the aforementioned Feliks Dzierzhynski unit, killed the base commander, Lieutenant Osiecki, in July 1943. Then, in December, Soviet partisans from Captain Ivan Shytov’s group deceitfully shattered the AK unit commanded by Captain Władysław Kochański. He and a dozen or so men were invited to dinner, only to be disarmed and imprisoned. Eleven AK men were shot while Bomba and a few others were taken behind the front line and handed over to the NKVD.

When evaluating the activities of Soviet partisans, it is worth remembering that the communists, though fighting the “Polish nationalists” as part of the “class struggle”, were also critical of the ethnic cleansing carried out by the UPA. That is why the Soviets helped the self-defences in Przebraż and Stara Huta survive, thus saving many Poles from death at the hands of the Ukrainian nationalists.

As the Red Army’s offensive progressed, large Soviet partisan units began venturing into regions previously inaccessible to them. The first was Kovpak’s grouping, entering Eastern Galicia in the spring of 1943. Although it got as far as the Carpathian Mountains, it was broken up there and the partisans returned to Volhynia in small groups. It was not until the beginning of 1944 that more units were sent to Galicia. In total, the USSR sent 134 units, numbering almost 26 thousand men, on such raids into Galicia. These sorties were led by large, well-armed groups (in terms of artillery as well), which could count on airdrops to replenish weapons and ammunition. UPA units could rarely take them on in open battle, and thus waged a war of attrition by picking off patrols. The nationalists would fire upon main columns on the march, then rapidly retire. They tried to defend Ukrainian villages from requisitioning and looting, but this was the most difficult task to accomplish – the weak self-defence units stood little chance against well-armed Soviets. From the beginning of

9 Fanny Sołomian-Łoc, *Getto ...*, p. 151.

10 SPP, MSW, 263/II, Wydział społeczny, *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne z ziem polskich*, pp. 34-35.

October 1943, not only individuals sympathetic to the OUN fell victim to the Soviet partisans, but also entire villages. On October 13, 1943, this fate befell Stara Rafalivka, where 47 to 60 people were killed. On October 31, 1943, Soviet partisans burned three Ukrainian villages: Borove, Karpylivka, and Dert. One hundred eighty-three peasants were killed in Karpylivka alone. When on March 21, 1944, the Mikhailov grouping came under fire from the self-defence of Velika Moshchanitsa, Mizoch region, the village was surrounded and shelled with cannons and mortars. After seven hours of fighting, the UPA's resistance was crushed, and the completely torched village seized. The "Nationalists", according to the Soviets, lost 224 people; this must have included a large number of civilians. Soviet losses stood at four dead and eight wounded.

Soviet partisan units from Volhynia began moving into the Lublin region at the beginning of 1944. First to reach the area was the 1st Ukrainian Partisan Division, formed out of Kovpak's grouping and commanded by Petro Vershyhora. Along the way, the Soviets, in cooperation with the AK, occupied the Slynaryn forests, destroying the famous UPA base "Sich", thus shattering the Bohun zahon and "Forest Devils" officer school. The Joseph Stalin unit commanded by the Pole Mikołaj "Mucha" Kunicki also reached the Lublin region, then moved on to the Bieszczady Mountains (where it clashed with the UPA on more than one occasion).

After the occupation of Volhynia by the Red Army in May 1944, Polish "red" units were subordinated to the Polish Partisan Headquarters. In the summer of that year, a portion of the partisans was finally relocated to the Lublin region. In the case of Soviet partisans, the NKVD leadership decided to utilize their experience in fighting the UPA. A large part of these units was thus directed to counter-insurgency operations, and only after a few months of their "new service" were they gradually demobilized. The nature of such actions is well reflected in reports by Mikołaj Kunicki's unit, which, once the front had passed, began battling the Ukrainian underground in the Drohobych region: "On 11 X 1944 in the village of Mosty 7 nationalists were detained, 18 Banderite farms were destroyed. In the arrests of Banderite families weapons, rifles, grenades, and ammunition were found. On 13 X 1944, 15 nationalists were killed in the villages of Monastyrts and Gorshaki and the villages burned down. On the morning of 12 XI, the village of Verbytsia where [the day before from axe blows – G.M.] partisan Mikhaïlo died was surrounded by partisans, the search for bandits did not yield positive results. The unit arrested 8 families of bandits as hostages, confiscated their property and burned their houses"¹¹.

11 Mikołaj Kunicki, *Pamiętnik ...*, pp. 430, 433.



Fig. 25 A couple hundred Czechs accused of collaboration with the Soviets and Poles died at the hands of the UPA in Volhynia. Pictured here: Czechs murdered by Ukrainians in Kholopychi village, Volhynia, 1943.

“Smash Everything. Turn it into Dust”

UPA brass was pleased with the results of the summer's anti-Polish operations. Kruk's unit report assessed: “After the purge of Poles in the field it is rare to come upon any Lashok [Pollack – G.M.]. They, just like the Germans, have concentrated in the larger district towns and centres and only from time to time conduct attacks out into the field”¹.

By the end of the summer of 1943, the UPA was in control of large swathes of Volhynia, creating insurgent republics within which the partisans held full authority. In September, Klym Savur felt so confident that he ordered the parcelling out of landed estates and remaining Polish farmsteads in the conquered territory, as well as the organization of local government elections and Ukrainian primary education. At the same time, new partisan units were created, now often made up of forced recruits rather than volunteers. Self-defences were formed in many Ukrainian villages. The idea was for every village to become a fortress and for all Ukrainians to become UPA supporters. It was with satisfaction therefore that occasional, sporadic, spontaneous anti-Polish manifestations by Ukrainian peasants were noted. In a report from Liudvypil district (Kostopol county) from November 1, 1943, we read:

On the day of 30 X 43, Ukrainians armed with scythes and pitchforks attacked the Lakhs in the Ukrainian village Balashavitsia and killed 8 Lakhs [Poles – G.M.], taking three alive – two Lakh women and one man who had been looting the Orthodox church. On 31 X 43 at 21:00 the same people attacked the Polish colony of Potalicia and burned all the Lakh buildings to the ground².

At the turn of 1943/1944, more and more signs indicated Germany's imminent defeat. The Red Army advanced from victory to victory, quickly approaching the pre-war eastern borders of Poland. The German occupation authorities were paying less and less attention to the activities of the Ukrainian nationalists and were preoccupied with preparations for evacuation. Thus, the UPA command decided to take advantage of the confusion caused by the oncoming front to liquidate Polish populations. The plan was to attack those towns from which German and Hungarian troops had already withdrawn but that had not yet been entered by the Soviets.

¹ Літопис УПА. Нова серія, в. 2, pp. 171-172.

² Літопис УПА. Нова серія, в. 11, Kyiv–Toronto 2007, p. 473.

The prologue to the Ukrainian “offensive” came on November 22, 1943, with an attack on the Czech-populated village of Kupiczów, which had openly declared itself for the Poles and deployed a platoon of troops to support the AK garrison stationed there. The attackers had one “tank” at their disposal (an armoured tractor armed with a small-calibre gun). Fortunately for the defenders, the “tank” broke down during the attack and the arrival of Jastrząb’s unit ultimately forced the Ukrainians to retreat.



Fig. 26 A Ukrainian partisan “tank” captured by Home Army soldiers in Kupychiv/
Kupiczów, November 1943.

During the night of December 6, the UPA attacked the villages of Budki Borowskie, Dołhań, and Okopy in Sarny county, taking advantage of the fact that the Soviet partisan unit that had been protecting them had left to carry out anti-German diversions. Probably over a hundred Poles were murdered there. That same day, Banderites killed forty-two Poles on one of the properties in the village colony of Stęzarzyce, Volodymyr-Volynskyi county, following the departure of the German garrison. In mid-December the UPA attacked the Dąbrowa khutor (Sarny county), killing over a dozen Poles and several Ukrainians. On December 15 in Kovel, they approached the edge of town and threw grenades at some of the houses. Several people died.

The majority of attacks occurred during the Christmas period. General Tadeusz Bór-Komorowski would write: "Strong UPA units, armed with machine guns and cannons, struck unexpectedly at our defensive bases. Ukrainian units were supported by large local Ukrainian mobs armed with axes, pitchforks, and scythes"³. On December 22 Ptakh's kurin struck Bortnica near Dubno. 26 Poles were killed (according to other sources 8 Poles and 3 Jews). The Polish-Jewish self-defence saved the population from total extermination. The UPA lost one man. In Kovel county the UPA attacked Stara Dąbrowa and Nowa Dąbrowa on December 23. Jastrząb's AK unit came to the aid of the weak self-defence at the critical moment. The UPA was repulsed.

On December 24 Volhynians attacked Polish houses in the suburbs of Olyka. Forty-two Poles were hacked to death with axes, often as they sat at the Christmas table. On the same day the UPA launched an assault on the outskirts of Lutsk – Hnidava, Barbarowszczyzna, Krasne, Wólka and Rivnenska Street. Over a hundred people were killed. On Christmas Day, December 25, UPA soldiers struck simultaneously at five Polish settlements: Janówka, Radomle, Stanisławówka, Batyń, and Lublatyn. A UPA unit drove into Stanisławówka on carts, pretending to be Germans. The partisans sitting up front wore German uniforms, while the rest hid under the straw on the carts. The self-defence was taken by surprise, which allowed the UPA to break into the settlement. Only the arrival of a relief AK company from Kupiczów salvaged the situation. Around noon the Ukrainians withdrew. Over forty Poles were murdered in Janówka, the same number in Radomle and nine in Batyń. Twelve more were killed in battle.

The UPA also attempted to liquidate Witoldówka village after the departure of Lieutenant Franciszek "Gzysm" Pukacki's unit to a grouping of the AK's 27th Infantry Division. During the night of December 26, Yasen's kurin attacked the village. Although several Poles were killed, the self-defence forces repulsed the attack. UPA losses were four dead and two wounded. On January 3, 1944, the inhabitants of Witoldówka evacuated to Ostróg.

On December 30, 1943, the UPA sotnia under Maks-Skorupskyi, supported by three 76 mm cannons, attacked Polish policemen in the Naręczyn estate, forcing them to retreat to nearby Beresteczko. The Ukrainians then surrounded Beresteczko and fired on it with cannons and machine guns, killing several people. A day later they attacked the industrial settlement of Orzew. Seeing no hope of defending themselves, the self-defence command decided to retreat six kilometres away to Klewań. About thirty Poles were killed. That same month forty-seven Poles were slaughtered in the Strzelecka colony of

3 *Armia Krajowa w dokumentach*, v. 3, Wrocław-Warsaw-Kraków-Gdańsk-Lódź 1990, p. 349.

Volodymyr county, and about ten more at the Ożenin railroad station and estate, Zdolbuniv county. In Lutsk county, attacks on Poles in Zamogile and Nieświcz conducted in December were unsuccessful.

On January 2, 1944, German and Hungarian troops left Ostroh after an attack by Soviet partisans, who briefly occupied the town. The next day, January 3, the UPA appeared in Ostroh, murdering thirty-eight Poles and setting fire to the straw reserves gathered by the Germans. Most of the Poles took refuge in the local monastery and prison, which the UPA did not manage to capture. The Poles were able to wait out the arrival of the Red Army. On January 3, 1944, the Germans left Olyka. Thirty-seven Poles died at the hands of the UPA before a relief force from Przebraż reached the town on January 13. The remaining inhabitants were transferred to Przebraż.

The Germans left Lanivtsi by February 2, 1944, taking most of the Poles there with them. As the escapees moved along the road to Vysnivets, they were attacked between Kuśkowce Wielkie and Śniegorówka. The Ukrainians encircled the rear of the column and, after breaking the weak resistance of the Schutzmannschaft, killed 129 Poles with "stones and rods"⁴. Only three Polish families remained in Lanivtsi, barricaded inside a brick church. On February 4, 1944, the UPA men broke down the vestry door and murdered eleven out of the twelve Poles hiding there (the one person who hid behind the open door survived). At the beginning of 1944, once the Germans had left, UPA men also attacked Klesów, which was desperately defended by the self-defence forces and a twenty-strong AK unit commanded by Czesław Wróblewski. The Poles did however manage to survive until the arrival of the Soviets. The self-defence in Worczynia in Volodymyr county was attacked by the UPA on January 6, 1944. The attack was repulsed, with the loss of four men. Less fortunate were the inhabitants of Borki village in Liuboml county, where on January 10, 1944, the UPA slaughtered fifty-five Poles. At the start of 1944, in the village of Worokomla near Kamień Koszyski, "a Ukrainian band rushed into the village on horseback, shot the Poles one by one, burning and levelling their houses to the ground"⁵.

Once the anti-Polish operation had begun, many people took refuge in the Monastery of the Discalced Carmelites in Vysnivets, which was attacked several times in 1943. A Schutzmannschaft of about twenty Poles took part in the defence. In January 1944 first the Germans and then the Hungarians left the town, taking with them part of the population, including the Polish Schutzmannschaft. Three to four hundred people took refuge inside the monastery. The Poles hoped that upon the Germans' departure the Soviets

4 Władysław Siemaszko, Ewa Siemaszko, *Ludobójstwo ...*, p. 484.

5 Account of J. Skarżyński in the author's collection.

would enter, but Ukrainian partisans got there first. In February 1944, an OUN Security Service unit approached the monastery pretending to be Soviet partisans (according to another version the bandits pretended to be Polish refugees). After breaching the walls, the Ukrainians initiated a slaughter. Panic broke out. People tried to flee the monastery, hiding in buildings and various nooks and crannies. Irena Sandecka described the events as follows: "Everyone was murdered, while the worst abuse was inflicted on women who had previously served the Germans, they were hung up by rope and burned alive inside the church"⁶. Even the monks were not spared and were hanged – only one survived the slaughter. Perhaps as many as three hundred people were killed. Some of the young women were abducted by OUN SB members. OUN-B member Luka Pavlyshyn recalled:

The Security Service had gotten to work in and around Wiśniowiec, as evidenced by the fires. Two women, one quite young, and three children under seven were crying on a sleigh, begging for mercy. [...] Hroza announced that the liquidation of Ukraine's enemies was underway. But there was no trial ...⁷.

At the same time, one hundred and thirty-eight people were murdered in Wiśniowiec Stary. In the following days, Ukrainian partisans began "hunting" for people who had hidden with trusted neighbours – Ukrainians. On February 27 three discovered Polish families were killed with axes.

Interestingly, in March of that year, a local Volhynian SB commander, one "Berkut" (N.N.), ordered his subordinates to observe and report on the activities of Poles targeting Ukrainians. He also ordered that Soviet partisans be informed of any instances of Poles collaborating with the Germans. "The point," Berkut explained, "is to produce [...] misunderstandings between the Poles and Bolsheviks and divert the partisans' attention from the Ukrainian population while directing it towards the Polish national minority"⁸.

Concurrently, the decision was made to completely obliterate all traces of Poles in Volhynia. In the OUN's Rivne super-region an order was issued on October 9, 1943, which read:

In areas where there are Polish monuments, churches, etc., Polish statues, smash everything, turn it into dust, leave no place untouched. Carry out this operation overnight between 10 to 11 X 1943⁹.

6 Cit. per: *Okrutna przestroga ...*, p. 199.

7 Василь Щеглюк, "..." роса на сонці". Політичний роман-хроніка, написаний на основі спогадів колишнього діяча ОУН-УПА Л.С. Павлишина, Lviv 1992, p. 130.

8 TsDAVOVU), c. 3838, d. 1, v. 57, p. 37, Orders from "Berkut" to "Denis" from 18 March 1944.

9 Літопис УПА. Нова серія, в. 11, p. 707.



Fig. 27 Panorama of Vyshnivets/Wiśniowiec from the 1920s. In the foreground the façade of Saint Michael's Church is visible.

Another order instructed:

Eliminate traces of Polishness:

- a) Destroy all four walls of churches and other houses of worship.
- b) Destroy any trees growing by houses so that no signs remain that someone might have once lived there (do not destroy fruit trees along roads).
- c) [...] destroy all Polish houses where Poles used to live (if Ukrainians reside in these buildings – it is necessary to dismantle and convert them into dugouts); if this is not done, the houses will be burned down and the people living in them will have no place to stay the winter. Note once again that if anything Polish remains, the Poles will lay claim to our lands¹⁰.

¹⁰ "Український історичний журнал", № 5, 1995, pp. 106-107.

Volhynian Partisans

The 27th Volhynian Infantry Division of the Home Army

On the night of January 3, 1944, the Red Army crossed Poland's pre-war eastern borders in the Rokytne area. Despite the desperate German defence, the Soviets took Rivne on February 2 and continued their advance toward the important railroad junction at Kovel. The Germans however decided to keep the city in their hands at all costs.

News of the situation on the front electrified the Polish underground. It could not be ruled out that the Soviets would soon reach the Bug River. In such circumstances, the commander of Volhynia AK District, Colonel Kazimierz "Luboń" Bąbiński, ordered the implementation of Operation Tempest on January 15, 1944. Per mobilization orders, all AK soldiers were to concentrate in areas between Kovel and Volodymyr-Volynskyi. Self-defence bases in Zasmyki (south of Kovel) and Bielin (north of Volodymyr-Volynskyi) served as designated assembly points. These areas became rally points for groups of partisan units arriving from across Volhynia, numerous groups of conspirators from towns, and finally Polish auxiliary police deserting their posts. On the night of January 20, 1944, the 107th police battalion left Maciejów – four hundred and fifty relatively well-armed men (about seven hundred policemen volunteered to join the AK, counting also outpost garrisons).

The concentration was not without complications. Some partisan units from the eastern parts of Volhynia had to force their way through areas controlled by the UPA. The units of Lieutenant Zygmunt "Olgiert" Kulczycki and Lieutenant Franciszek "Gzys" Pukacki fought many skirmishes against the Ukrainians. The UPA surrounded Gzys's soldiers on January 11, 1944, in Sady Małe, but they successfully broke out of the encirclement overnight. Only a portion of Bomba-Kochański's unit reached its destination, the remainder was disarmed by the Soviets. The mobilization was additionally hampered by the fact that the decision to delegate partial forces to carry out Operation Tempest was accepted with reluctance in the field. Polish partisans' most important task was to protect the population. No wonder that in some places, such as Przebraż, they boycotted it. Here the widely respected self-defence commander Henryk "Harry" Cybulski was even put under house arrest to prevent him from carrying out the order (though in the event of a UPA attack he was to resume command immediately).

In Kovel, the town's abandonment by clandestine Home Army soldiers going to the AK 27th Volhynian Infantry Division (WDP AK) grouping caused panic among the Government Delegation. Its operatives feared that after the German withdrawal inhabitants would be left completely defenceless. Though AK command left a company and later even a reinforced battalion of soldiers for defence in Zielona near Kovel, it was still possible that relief would come too late at a critical moment. Widespread bitterness was also caused by the actions of district delegate Kazimierz Banach, who appeared briefly in Kovel in February 1944 but left immediately afterwards, having earlier given orders for the population to stay put. Resultantly, the already poor relations between the Delegation and the AK broke down to such an extent that the leadership of the Polish Underground State, to calm the situation down, decided to dismiss both Colonel Bąbiński and Banach from their positions. The AK commander in Volhynia became Major Jan Wojciech "Oliwa" Kiwerski (in the course of operations promoted to lieutenant colonel), while the duties of the government delegate were taken over by Captain Julian "Wuj" Kozłowski.



Fig. 28
Jan Wojciech "Oliwa" Kiwerski, successor of Colonel Kazimierz Bąbiński as commander of Home Army Volhynia District, from February 1944 commander of the Home Army 27th Volhynian Infantry Division.

Despite these problems, two strong groupings were formed as a result of the concentration: "Gromada" and "Osnowa", based on which the formation of the 27th WDP AK began in February 1944. Within a few weeks, a regular military

unit was created with an efficiently functioning HQ, divided into regiments and battalions, with the subdivisions: communication, sappers, supply, and sanitary. The division numbered about six and a half thousand soldiers. The plan was to carry out anti-German diversions on communication routes as part of Tempest; also planned was the capture of Kovel and Volodymyr-Volynskyi. The AK's participation in the liberation of Volhynia was to evidence the region's Polish character. The AK Main HQ and government-in-exile wanted to convert any military successes of the 27th WDP AK into political arguments in negotiations with the USSR. It is worth emphasizing that the creation of the WDP AK was not triggered by a need for more effective combat operations against the Ukrainians (this task could continue to be realized by partisan units and self-defence bases) but to liberate Volhynia from German occupation.

Another problem was that the division's officer cadre (partially consisting of Cichociemni, the "Silent Unseen", i.e. elite spec-ops paratroopers) had to carry out an appropriate educational campaign among the rank-and-file soldiers, highly sensitized by UPA massacres, concerning the aforementioned goal of establishing the division. Tadeusz Sztumberk-Rychter, the division's chief of staff, wrote of the mood in the formed division:

The soldier was young and inexperienced. At first, he took up arms for purely personal motives of self-defence, defence of himself and his loved ones, only later did he develop a patriotic motivation for his actions [...]. No wonder, then, that he considered the Ukrainians [...] to be his vital and main enemy, whose actions he had experienced tangibly. He developed the opinion that beating Germans [...] was the task of others, while the goal of Polish units should only be to fight the UPA. This state of affairs forced the commanders to carry out an enormous awareness-raising campaign¹.

In the area of the 27th WDP AK's formation a kind of republic was created, an area free from the presence of the enemy, where AK soldiers cared for the safety of Polish civilians. The area taken over by the Poles – measuring 80 by 40 kilometres – included several larger and smaller villages. For the first time since the outbreak of the war, national flags were flown openly, trials were held under Polish law, military parades and field masses took place. The 27th WDP AK's quartermaster facilities – mills, slaughterhouses, workshops, and warehouses – were set up in Zasmyki, known as the Zasmyki Republic. In light of this, it is difficult to consider the AK division as just another partisan unit. If we can at all say that anyone else took part in a full rebellion apart from the participants of the Warsaw Uprising, then I believe this should apply first and foremost to the soldiers of 27th WDP AK.

1 Tadeusz Sztumberk-Rychter, *Artylerzysta piechuram*, Warsaw 1967, pp. 159-160.



Fig. 29
Tadeusz Sztumberk-Rychter, Chief-of-staff
of the Home Army 27th Volhynian
Infantry Division.

Skirmishes against the Germans had been occurring since the end of January 1944. On February 15 the division's cavalry pursued the Germans as far as the outskirts of Volodymyr-Volynskyi. However, in the first weeks of the division's existence, fighting the Germans was limited to covering operations and reconnaissance to avoid endangering the safety of civilians.

Yet, over a dozen offensive operations were carried out against UPA units, which had captured the Slynaryn and Mosyr forests, as well as tracts located on the left bank of the Stokhid River. In the south, Ukrainian forces were deployed in the villages-turned-fortresses of Ovadne, Gniine (modern Krasnostav), Osmyhovychi, Oziutychi, and Tverdyn. Thanks to such favourable emplacements, the UPA could attack Polish units at any time. This forced the division command to conduct pre-emptive operations in which relatively numerous and well-armed forces were used.

On January 19 the "Osnowa" grouping, having rescinded an attack order on Volodymyr-Volynskyi, attacked Gniine upon receiving information that the UPA was planning to strike Bielin. The Poles failed however to break through the strong enemy defence and retreated to Bielin and Sieliska at night. On January 25 the UPA unit from Gniine, emboldened by its success, attempted to capture Bielin. The Ukrainians temporarily captured Helenówka, Stefanówka, Andresówka and Białozowszczyzna, reaching the Volodymyr-Volynskyi-Kovel

road. By evening the attack was repulsed, but the Ukrainians killed many civilians. In the following days, the AK captured villages Babie and Shchuryn on the east side of the Stokhid River and Budyshe near Kovel in two sudden raids.

At the end of January 1944, the 1st Ukrainian Partisan Division of Petro Vershyhora contacted the 27th WDP AK's command. They decided to jointly capture the territory of the Svnaryn forests, where the UPA's "Sich" zahon was stationed. In the face of the enemy's strength, the UPA made no serious attempt to resist, leaving behind earthen fortifications. Thanks to this action the Svnaryn forests and adjacent villages were secured. The Ukrainian population was expelled from captured Ukrainian villages to protect against possible diversions. According to Yaroslav Tsaruk, a Ukrainian excursionist, soldiers of the 27th WDP AK committed murders of Ukrainian civilians in some villages. In Okhnivka, with the highest victim tally, 166 Ukrainians were allegedly killed on February 12, 1944. This information, however, is not confirmed by Polish works concerning the Division, and doubts may also be raised by the fact that in his work Tsaruk attributes to Poles crimes that were clearly committed by Germans². This issue requires further research and careful verification of each case cited.

On February 8 "Osnova" assisted the self-defence in Edwardopol, while Ukrainian outposts in Vorchyn and Puziv (modern Zoria) were captured. On February 20 the Poles captured Stenzharychi. A February 16 attack on Osmyhovychi ended in defeat; it later turned out that the attack mistakenly targeted a Soviet partisan unit that had captured the village two days earlier.

On February 29 three AK battalions attacked the UPA base in Oziutychi. The assault collapsed under the fire of machine guns (particularly from two HMG's positioned in a church tower and mill) and mortars. The Poles were additionally shelled by three German airplanes, which probably came to investigate the situation and joined the fight – twenty men were lost and twenty more were wounded. According to Ukrainian sources, ten bodies were left on the battlefield. The UPA fighters also took two captives "who testified to the Polish plans"³. After their bloody defeat in the battle for Oziutychi, the Polish troops withdrew to Dominopol. Along the way, according to Kowalski, "the

2 Ярослав Царук, *Трагедія волинських сіл 1943-1944 рр.*, Lviv 2003, pp. 50-62, 91-93.

3 *Волинь і Холмищина 1938-1947. Польсько-українське протистояння та його відлуння. Дослідження, документи, спогади*, гол. ed. Я. Ісаєвич, Lviv 2003 (Україна. Культурна спадщина, національна свідомість, державність, p. 521.



Fig. 30 Soldiers of 1st Company 3rd Battalion 50th Regiment of the Home Army 27th Volhynian Infantry Division in Zelena/Zielona, January 1944.

corpses of two Ukrainian women were left on the trampled snow, shot suddenly by “Żbik”. “Mur” sharply criticized this macabre act”⁴.

An attack by Lieutenant Kazimierz “Kord” Filipowicz’s unit on Przekórka that same day was more successful. The village was captured, and the Ukrainian units were forced to flee. The unit of Second Lieutenant Jerzy “Lech” Krasowski scored a victory during reconnaissance operations near Haiky at the beginning of March. Battles conducted by “Gromada” soldiers on March 12 for Korytnytsia (33 Ukrainians were reportedly killed there) and March 18 for Zapillia were also successful. Within two months, between January 11 and March 18, 1944, soldiers of the 27th WDP AK fought sixteen major battles against the Ukrainians. Operations against the UPA should be considered a success. They broadened the division’s operational base, securing Polish forces against sudden Ukrainian attacks. They also provided the troops with relatively good provisions, as a lot of food was found in abandoned Ukrainian villages. This is how division doctor Grzegorz Fedorowski perceived Volhynia:

4 Olgierd Kowalski, *Z Wołynia przez Polesie do Berlina. Wspomnienia żołnierza 27 Wołyńskiej Dywizji Piechoty AK*, Bydgoszcz 2005, p. 42.

Around [...] the fields, whole herds of cattle wander. They have plenty of fodder. For there is hay in the stacks and all the barns stand open. Inside the barns rule hordes of hens fat off Volhynian wheat. [...] While in the middle of the street, grunting loudly, now and then a frightened sow runs by, often leading her already well-grown piglets⁵.

In the following days, German units became the division's main enemy. At the beginning of March 1944, AK soldiers managed to establish contact with Red Army subunits. On March 17, Major Jan "Kowal" Szatowski met with General Sergeyev, who commanded Soviet troops advancing on Kovel. In a friendly meeting, Szatowski presented the Soviet commander with the Polish division's location and expressed his readiness to cooperate in the fight against the Germans, which was welcomed. Establishing contact with the Soviets influenced the attitude of the units toward the Ukrainian population. We read:

With the arrival of regular Soviet troops in Volhynia, all requisitioning, i.e. "bam-bioshka", and reprisal actions practically ceased. It seemed that the presence of Soviet troops influenced this change. I guess, like the Soviets, we were demonstrating that Ukrainians were also our full-fledged citizens. We could not set a precedent for Soviet intervention in defence of our own citizens. Now there was money to buy food for the army from the Ukrainians or the Soviets⁶.

On March 20, as part of the operation agreed upon with the Red Army, AK units took Turiisk. News of the small town's capture reached London by radio and immediately appeared in official Allied communications. This infuriated the Soviet leadership. Right after its publishing, First Secretary of the Communist Party of Ukraine, Nikita Khrushchev, advised that it be denied (which it was) and argued that the only Polish units fighting Germans were groups completely subordinate to the Soviets.

Not surprisingly, in this situation the next meeting with Soviet command on March 26 began in confrontation. When greeting General Sergeyev Lieutenant Colonel Oliwa-Kiwerski mentioned a meeting on Polish soil, the Soviet commander immediately declared: "this is Ukrainian land, and Poland will start only at the Bug River"⁷. During the meeting, it was also urged to subordinate the division to those Polish Army units created in the USSR, a proposal that Kiwerski rejected. However, the Poles did operationally subordinate themselves to the Red Army and in the following days took part in the battle for Kovel alongside it.

5 Grzegorz Fedorowski, *Leśne ognie*, Warsaw 1965, pp. 71-72.

6 Olgiert Kowalski, *Z Wołynia ...*, p. 32.

7 Cit. per: Władysław Filar, *Wołyń 1939-1944. Historia, pamięć, pojednanie*, Warsaw 2009, p. 227.



Fig. 31 Soldiers of 1st Platoon 2nd Battalion 43 Regiment of the Home Army 27th Volhynian Infantry Division, resting after battles at Staweczki and Stavki/Stawki. Mokrets/Mokrzec, Volodymyr district, April 1944.

Although the city was encircled, the Germans launched a series of attacks aimed at breaking through to it. Some of these assaults struck the positions of the 27th WDP AK in the Mozyr forests. Due to lacking heavy armaments, the AK repulsed them with difficulty, while the Germans not only managed to re-establish contact with the Kovel garrison but also threatened the Polish units with encirclement. On the night of April 12, in a meeting with General Gromov, Lieutenant Colonel Kiwerski asked for permission to withdraw the division behind the Turiya river line. He received a categorical refusal. Gromov gave orders to defend the positions in the Mozyr forests regardless of losses. Holding fast to this order would have meant the destruction of the entire division, which is, perhaps, exactly what the Soviets had in mind.

On April 18 the Germans closed the encirclement; additionally, the division commander was killed in clashes. On the order of Major Tadeusz "Żegota" Sztumberk-Rychter, who replaced Oliwa, the insurgents broke through to Polesia on the night of April 20. There, in the middle of May, still clashing with the Germans, they were encircled once more in the Shatsk forests. In light of the division's dire position, Żegota decided to break through behind Soviet lines. During the march to the attack's forward positions, an order was received

from Home Army Headquarters ordering a breakthrough to the Lublin region. Most of the subunits turned back west, but the new orders failed to reach Captain Kazimierz “Garda” Rzanaik’s group – his unit of six hundred men broke through across the Pripyat River to the Soviets, losing 120 men in the hellish fire.

The remaining part of the division reached the Bug River, weaving between German units, and on June 9 made its way into the Lublin region. On July 20–21, 1944, the soldiers of the division again took part in Operation Tempest, liberating Kock and Lubartów. Immediately after the arrival of Soviet troops, the division was disarmed, thus ceasing to exist.

Soldiers of the 27th WDP AK undoubtedly wanted to include Volhynia in the territory of postwar Poland. However, the primary goal of Operation Tempest was to manifest to the world that Polish society wanted to live in a free, independent state, independent both from Germany and the USSR. As such, it constituted a military action vis-à-vis Germany and political action vis-à-vis the Soviets. Thus, in implementing Operation Tempest, whether in Volhynia or Warsaw, Home Army insurgents fought first and foremost for a free and independent Poland, and only secondly for this or that border demarcation.

Captain Michał “Sokół” Fijałk, who was a participant in the 1939 Polish and 1940 French campaigns and a Cichociemny paratropped into Poland on September 1, 1942, commanded one of the WDP AK battalions in 1944. Years later he wrote:

I witnessed many different armies and nationalities alongside whom I fought in one line. But nowhere and never have I met soldiers as brave, as devoted, and as capable of sacrificing everything in the service of the Fatherland, as the soldiers of the 27th Volhynian Infantry Division⁸.

8 Michał Fijałk, *27 Wofyńska Dywizja Piechoty AK*, Warsaw 1986, p. 160.

“In Eastern Lesser Poland We Have War”

Even before the anti-Polish purges in Volhynia began, the civilian section of the Polish underground debated what kind of policy the reborn Polish Republic should pursue toward its Ukrainian minority. Three lines of political thinking emerged among the underground political groups on this question. The first, represented by such national circles as the *Stronnictwo Narodowe* (National Party, SN) and “*Szaniec*”, denied the existence of the “Ukrainian problem” altogether, taking a firm stance on national assimilation. These blocs held the idea that after the war a portion of Ukrainians should be resettled deep inside the country and largely dispersed (with two or three families to each purely Polish village), thanks to which they would be easily Polonized. “Rebellious” Ukrainians were to be resettled beyond the Zbrucz River – to the USSR. The authors of an internal report of the Home Army Information and Propaganda Bureau assessed:

Not only does the SN completely maintain its pre-war extermination policy in this regard, but also radicalizes it exceptionally. The SN demands that the practice of mass resettlement of the population be used in the south-eastern provinces to remove foreign or hostile elements from the territory of the given state¹.

It is worth noting that the SN developed its nationalistic concepts even before the anti-Polish ethnic cleansing in Volhynia.

A different vision of future nationality policy was presented by such groups as the People's Party, the Party of Labor, and Freedom-Equality-Independence (or the Polish Socialist Party), plus others. The supporters of these groups were in favour of granting full civic rights to the Ukrainian minority according to the principle “equal duties – equal rights” and were against mass deportation plans. In the opinion of the socialists – as we read in a text from 1942 – “resettling several million Ukrainians beyond the Zbrucz River, or nearly 2 million beyond the San River [...] would be [...] a barbarism that would completely divide Poles and Ukrainians”².

1 Ryszard Torzecki, *Polacy i Ukraińcy. Sprawa ukraińska w czasie II wojny światowej na terenie II Rzeczypospolitej*, Warsaw 1993, p. 212.

2 *Ibidem*, p. 210.

Finally, a third direction – of “national autonomy”, as the authors of the report called it – was supported by the Democratic Party (Stronnictwo Demokratyczne, SD) and the Polish Socialists. These groups postulated granting territorial autonomy to the Ukrainian minority, with the SD presenting a detailed project of “creating separate Polish and Ukrainian cantons”³.

Divergences within the Polish underground were particularly noticeable after theses on Ukrainian policy were adopted by the Polish Government in London on March 31, 1943. The Government took the position of not only guaranteeing the Ukrainian population “full, legal, and actual equality”, but also of extending “extensive territorial self-government, including provincial administration” to the lands inhabited by it. In further paragraphs, Ukrainians were promised, among other things, a national university in Lviv (for which they had been clamouring throughout the interwar period), all freedoms for the Greek Catholic and Orthodox Churches, fair land reform, the introduction of three representatives of the Ukrainian population to the National Council, and the employment of a certain number of them in the state apparatus. In return, Ukrainians were expected to change their attitude in the press to a more conciliatory one toward Poland, to form a common front against Germany, and to provide declarations against Soviet claims.

The government resolution reached Poland by radio and sparked a heated discussion among the Polish underground, even leading to a change in the AK leadership in Lviv. Unsurprisingly, it was strongly criticized by National Democracy supporters, who opposed any concessions to the Ukrainians. In the end, the opponents of the Government’s theses succeeded in blocking their publication in Poland, which was aided greatly by the arrest of supporters of the open national policy: Home Army commander General Stefan “Grot” Rowecki on June 30, 1943, and Government Delegate for the Country Jan Piekalkiewicz earlier on February 19, 1943.

On July 30, 1943, the National Political Representation (a grouping of representatives of the main political forces of Underground Poland, KRP), instead of publishing the Government’s position, issued its own “Proclamation to the Ukrainian Nation”. It contained such statements:

Poland [...] together with the Allies will participate in rebuilding a new and better world. Ukrainian society [...] has, to a large extent, followed a different path than that of the Poles: that of collaboration with the occupier. [...] Acts of further collaboration with the Germans, acts of cruelty and rape, recently inflicted by Ukrainians on the Polish population in the eastern lands of the Republic of Poland at the instigation of the occupants and often on their initiative, continue

3 *Ibidem*, p. 212.

to dig a chasm between the Polish and Ukrainian peoples [...]. The great historical hour on the clock of history is approaching – the hour of justice's final victory. Whoever is unable to sense it condemns himself. [...] We understand and appreciate the aspirations of the Ukrainian people to create an independent Ukraine. We declare, however, that we will not give up the eastern lands of the Republic of Poland, in the southern part of which Poles have lived side by side with Ukrainians for centuries and on which the Polish people have produced immense civilizational and economic contributions. [...] We, therefore, guarantee on these lands full and sovereign development of the Ukrainian population based on the principles of freedom and equality of civil rights and obligations⁴.

On September 12, 1943, posters with the KRP appeal were hung around Lviv. 1200 copies of the proclamation were sent to top representatives of the Ukrainian intelligentsia.

Perhaps the most accurate assessment of this proclamation was made by the SD in a special letter dated August 30. In a short and concise text, all its weaknesses were pointed out, rightly noting that "the proclamation does not guarantee Ukrainians within the borders of the Republic any specific rights. It is limited to general phrases, which will undoubtedly be regarded as empty platitudes in the present situation, all the more so because some phrases [...] will be regarded as provoking the national pride of the Ukrainians"⁵.

The publication of the Polish government's resolution would not have changed the course of events. It came late and could not have satisfied Ukrainian circles. Nevertheless, this omission should be considered a mistake. Revealing the position of the Polish authorities would have been important also today since it would have shown Poland's goodwill and willingness to resolve the accumulated Polish-Ukrainian animosities by democratic means. In the meantime, the whole affair has rather become a show of anti-Ukrainian prejudice and dislike.

However, one cannot fail to notice the attitude of Polish politicians was influenced by the anti-Ukrainian sentiments of Polish society. One report from the Polish underground characterized them as follows: "there is no discussion of political liberalism regarding the Ukrainians [...]. Whoever wishes to take a different stance is lost to the local society, even if they happen to be a most popular individual"⁶.

The information about the murder of Poles in Volhynia prompted AK command in Eastern Galicia to take immediate action. On May 17, 1943, order

4 SPP, A 9 5/9, *Sprawy ukraińskie w polskiej prasie podziemnej za czerwiec, lipiec, sierpień 1943 roku*, *Rzeczpospolita Polska z 9 sierpnia 1943 roku*.

5 *Archiwum Adama Bienia ...*, pp. 197-199.

6 Cit. per: Grzegorz Hryciuk, *Polacy we Lwowie 1939-1944. Życie codzienne*, Warsaw 2000, p. 389.

no. 269 was issued, outlining the rules for establishing self-defence. The Polish underground was much stronger in Galicia than in Volhynia, so it was decided that a firm stance should be taken towards the Ukrainians. A radiogram sent to London suggested:

We understand this conciliatory tone of yours towards the Ukrainians, nevertheless, it is necessary to threaten them. There is fear that the murders will spread from Volhynia to Lesser Poland. [...] There the Ukrainian question comes before the German one. Hatred towards Ukrainians is vicious⁷.

A campaign was also launched to liquidate Ukrainians accused of being nationalist sympathizers – in Starunia and Maniawa, Stanisławów Voivodeship, throughout April for example. According to reports from the Ukrainian Central Committee, by the end of 1943 103 Ukrainians had been killed in such operations, and by mid-1944 this number had risen to 521. Congruently, by mid-November 1943 alone, three hundred Poles had lost their lives.

On September 12, 1943, a Home Army unit that had arrived from Warsaw shot – allegedly by mistake – Ukrainian professor Andriy Lastovetskyi. His death caused a major commotion in the entire city. Soon afterwards, the OUN killed Polish professor Bolesław Jałowcy in retaliation. The real threat of a mutual massacre loomed. This prompted the Polish underground to offer the OUN-B an informal agreement not to include people from Lviv's cultural and scientific circles in the spiral of terror. Both sides accepted these arrangements.

These were not the only Polish-Ukrainian talks held at the time. The first contact between OUN-B and representatives of the Polish underground took place as early as 1941-1942 but ended with the arrest of the Polish delegates by the Germans (possibly resulting from a denunciation by the rival OUN-M faction). In 1943 new talks between representatives of the Polish and Ukrainian underground began. On the Polish side, they were led by representatives of Department II (intelligence) of the Area Staff and the Delegation, including Henryk "Walery" Pohoski and Zbigniew "Jan Gnatowski" Załęski. On the Ukrainian side were representatives of the OUN Central Provid foreign affairs department, codenamed "R-33", including Mykhailo Stepaniak and Yevhen Vretsiona. Opening the talks, the Poles were aware of the ambiguity surrounding their situation. On the one hand, they were to negotiate only with Ukrainians loyal to the Polish state, while on the other, it was the OUN that held majority support among Ukrainian society.

7 SPP, Radiogram received on 6 August 1943 from Kazia, v. 73, radiogram 215.

From the outset, both sides were faced with the virtually insoluble problem of borders. The Polish underground insisted that Poland's eastern borders remain unchanged, while the Ukrainian underground wanted an independent Ukraine including Volhynia and East Galicia. Both sides assured each other that if their claims to the disputed lands were supported, they would guarantee full respect for the civil rights of the minorities living there. In their proposals, the Poles aimed to obtain a public declaration that the Ukrainians living in the Second Polish Republic wished to remain Polish citizens. It was assumed that if the creation of an independent state became impossible, the Ukrainian side would issue such a declaration in fear of being incorporated into the USSR. As part of this minimal contingency plan, delaying the outbreak of a "Ukrainian revolt" in Eastern Galicia was hoped for. It was therefore suggested in the talks that if the possibility of creating a Ukrainian state arose, the borders between it and Poland would be determined peacefully by the governments of both future states.

The Ukrainian delegation, in turn, wanted above all to establish contact first with the Polish government-in-exile and then, through it, with the Western Allies. Interrogated by the NKVD, representative of OUN's Central Provid Oleksandr Lutskyi later testified: "This was the main purpose of talks with the Poles, scrupulously hidden from them"⁸. Moreover, the OUN members wanted to achieve the Polish government's official resignation from disputed lands, recognition of the OUN as the "only legitimate representative of [Ukrainian – G.M.] authority", and far-reaching military cooperation against the Soviets. As one can presume, they only considered the establishment of contacts with the Allies to be realistic.

The talks (held over several meetings) between the Polish and Ukrainian underground did not yield any results, as they simply never could have. As Ryszard Torzecki aptly noted, "the parties had nothing to offer each other that could be accepted and that would fundamentally change the situation then or in the future"⁹. Neither the Poles nor the Ukrainians were ready to make any territorial concessions. Additionally, and not without reason, they suspected each other of a double game. Probably the only tangible result of these deliberations was limiting the negative effects of the Directorate of Diversion's killing of Professor Lastovetskyi in Lviv.

The talks did not in any way affect the implementation of the Banderites' plans. A massive anti-Polish UPA campaign began in Eastern Galicia in the spring of 1944, quickly spreading to all districts of the region. Home Army

⁸ *Polacy i Ukraińcy ...*, p. 277.

⁹ Ryszard Torzecki, *Polacy ...*, p. 221.

command signalled that as a result of Ukrainian attacks, entire populations were perishing. It also assessed with no illusions that UPA units “aim at the extermination of the Polish element from these areas”¹⁰.

As Home Army Commander General Bór-Komorowski reported:

To counteract the devastating Ukrainian operation, Area Command has ordered immediate self-defence and pacification counter-operations throughout the region. [...] The Polish population of smaller settlements is to be grouped in larger clusters, which will constitute defensive bases. In the event of increasing intensity of massacres, the order was made to employ reprisals in the form of pacification operations against Ukrainian settlements¹¹.

Retaliatory actions often targeted individuals not connected to the attacks. For example, on March 8, 1944, following an attack on the village of Błyszczwody, several Ukrainians returning from market in Zhovkva were shot dead. That same month, soldiers of the Lviv Directorate of Diversion shot seventeen people and a local Greek Catholic priest and his family in Soroki near Stare Sioło, killed six people in a nearby forester's lodge, and nine in Gnila. Forty-eight Ukrainian wagon drivers from Porsza and Podciemnia, who were going to buy wood, were murdered in Łopuszna. On more than one occasion, leaflets were delivered to the Ukrainians demanding that they leave, modelled after the UPA's calls. One Polish leaflet read:

Ukrainians! The murders and attacks of your bands [...] make our coexistence impossible [...]. Therefore, I order Ukrainians to leave villages inhabited by Poles within 48 hours. Failure to comply with this order will be punishable by death¹².

Another quotation, to my mind, adequately demonstrates the tragic reality of the time: “On 13 VI a Pole was shot in Antoniówka. The Poles managed to catch one Ukrainian, whom they hacked to death”¹³.

In Lviv, Operation Vesper was ordered in response to the murders of young Poles by Ukrainian policemen. On March 9 and 12, 1944, Home Army patrols took to the city streets to kill every policeman they encountered. As a result of this successful operation, eleven policemen were shot dead and two others

10 *Armia Krajowa w dokumentach*, v. 3, Wrocław–Warsaw–Kraków– Gdańsk–Łódź 1990, p. 346.

11 *Ibidem*.

12 Archiwum Wschodnie, Zbiór Wojciecha Bukata, Raport Biura Wschodniego Mt 17 – K II z 26 maja 1944 r.

13 *Ibidem*.

wounded. The Poles lost two men, but they achieved their goal – the murders in Lviv ceased.

The actions of the Polish underground were nonetheless unable to ensure the safety of the Polish population. Ukrainian activities generated, as in Volhynia, a wave of refugees to the cities and then further west. The evacuation was organized by the Germans, assisted by the Central Welfare Council (*Rada Główna Opiekuńcza*), which provided aid to the refugees. The Polish underground observed the population's escape with great concern, perceiving it primarily as a threat to Poland's ability to hold these territories. "The districts", reads a report from the Eastern Territories, "most affected by the Ukrainian massacres have either already been completely emptied of their Polish population, or those remaining are thinking of leaving as soon as possible"¹⁴. About three hundred thousand people probably left the Kresy at this time.

The Polish underground in Galicia faced an enormous dilemma: who to fight – the Germans or the Ukrainians? To prepare for an armed uprising or to organize self-defence? Home Army command was determined to carry out Operation Tempest even if this did weaken the self-defence capabilities of Polish villages against the UPA. A conviction held that agreeing to an unlimited struggle against the Ukrainians would weaken Polish chances of keeping the Kresy within Poland. Arguments in favour of such a solution were substantively presented by Colonel Jan Rzepecki. During one discussion, he stated "that providing the weapons needed in the Kresy, which were in short supply even at HQ, would fan the flames of war to unimaginable proportions, while global public opinion would deem the fight for the September 1939 border a political mistake"¹⁵. For this reason, it was decided that, apart from limited self-defence actions, no overly intensive operations should be taken against the UPA, as this could be used politically by the Soviets to accuse the Poles of avoiding fighting the Germans.

Most of the forces of the Lviv Home Army were thus conserved for the fight against Hitler, which was to begin once the Red Army had arrived. Only single operational groups were sent into the field to support self-defence bases, for example in Hanaczów. This endangered Polish lives, though it was deemed potentially beneficial from the point of view of the Polish state. At the same time, it was recognized that carrying out Operation Tempest would increase German repressions. Immediately after the creation of the Home Army's 27th Volhynian Division, the Germans began to disarm Polish self-defence bases in Galicia, seeing them as a potential threat. This was probably the

14 Archiwum Wschodnie, Zbiór Wojciecha Bukata, Raport z ziem wschodnich nr 40.

15 Ryszard Torzecki, *Polacy ...*, p. 272.

reason behind a pacification of the aforementioned Hanaczów or “exposing” the Polish population taking refuge in the monastery in Podkamin to the UPA. The only consolation for Polish command in this situation was probably the realization that sending Home Army units to Lviv would endanger the lives of its inhabitants. After all, one could not rule out attempts by the Ukrainians to capture the city, especially if the UPA gained the support of the SS “Galizien” division.

Polish nationalists were very critical of Home Army actions. In one document we read:

The Home Army has not fulfilled the hopes placed in it. It has not provided a more effective framework for the self-defence of the Polish population. It forbade reprisals at the initial stage [...], no significant rearming of the Polish population was realized, as a result of which, in many cases, UPA bands [...] did not encounter any resistance when attacking Poles. [...] As a result of the lack of military preparation in the area, orders to remain put became unrealistic¹⁶.

In contrast, another wrote:

In eastern Lesser Poland we have war. A ruthless, cruel, and unavoidable war for us. We're waging it, regardless of whether it's desired by the Warsaw politique, a supporter of Volhynia's Ukrainian ideology [...]. Today, our former pets are coming at us with knives in their teeth, they will go after their patrons and protectors with no shame [...]. Because we wage this war regardless of whether we want to fight at all, regardless of whether we are ready for this war, regardless of whether we can defend ourselves at all, or whether a new Żółte Wody awaits us. [...] It's high time to get it into our heads forever that [...] NOTHING is going to change the mood of Ukrainian society towards us or towards Poland. They want to slaughter us in cold blood! This must become the cornerstone of our view of reality and the basis for all our actions, both political and military, in the future¹⁷.

The National Democrats believed that they should concentrate on the fight here and now with the Ukrainians. According to them, Operation Tempest should be abandoned, and all possible forces thrown into defending Poles, not shying away from German assistance either. In the face of the monstrous crimes committed by Ukrainian nationalists, there was less and less support in Polish society for ideas that sought to develop any model of coexistence

16 Lucyna Kulińska, *Dzieje Komitetu Ziemi Wschodnich na tle losów ludności polskiej w latach 1943-1947*, v. 2, Kraków 2003, p. 27.

17 Archiwum Wschodnie, Zbiór Wojciecha Bukata, Memoriał “Polityczne i wojskowe położenie Małopolski Wschodniej w świetle ostatnich wydarzeń”.

with Ukrainians in a future state. In an article titled "Wołyń nas zjednoczył" (Volhynia has united us), published in late 1943, we read:

Volhynia has achieved more than a whole library of works on Polish-Ukrainian issues [...]. Ukrainians must not have any political rights in Poland. Conditions for economic and cultural development yes, but no participation in governing the state. [...] Even the Ukrainian intelligentsia and priests lack anything in common with [this – G.M.] civilization, while the commoners are permeated by the most uncontrollable and wild instincts, which will probably mellow only after centuries of upbringing in an appropriate cultural climate¹⁸.

Advocating for retaliation against the Ukrainian community, they bluntly reasoned: "For the psyche of the Ukr[ainians] is the psyche of vile, deceitful, and cowardly people. This is the reason for their acts against defenceless and weaker people"¹⁹. In another National Democratic study, an unknown author, after describing various crimes committed by Ukrainian nationalists, concluded his text with the line: "A 'kindly Ruthenian folk', worthy of being dealt with just as the English dealt on their land with ... wolves"²⁰.

In turn, the Government Lviv Delegation assessed:

Our eastern policy has the choice of either abandoning the eastern borderlands [...] or recognizing them as [...] an integral part of the Polish state. The first alternative is out of the question, and some of its adherents are described as insane or traitors. The second alternative is a confession of faith by the Polish people as a whole and by the Government representing them. There is some disagreement as to what to do in this case with the Ukr[ainian] element, whose existence is a fact. The Polish society here adheres unconditionally and uniformly to a simple principle: to remove the Ukr[ainian] problem, just as the Ukrainians want to remove the Polish problem to their advantage, but without using Ukr[ainian] methods. There is, however, a certain segment of Polish society which adheres to the principle of coexistence with the Ukrainians and recognition of them as cohabitants of this land. These are all those who have not come into contact with the Ukrainian problem at all [...]. The best [...] cure for them would be to come here, to endure and to suffer²¹.

18 Cit. per: Ryszard Torzecki, *Polska myśl polityczna wobec kwestii ukraińskiej w czasie II wojny światowej (kraj i emigracja)*, in: *Polska – Polacy – mniejszości narodowe*, ed. Wojciech Wrzesiński, Wrocław–Warsaw–Kraków 1992, p. 379.

19 *Kwestia ukraińska i eksterminacja ludności polskiej w Małopolsce Wschodniej*, eds. Lucyna Kulińska, Adam Roliński, Kraków 2004, p. 62.

20 Lucyna Kulińska, *Dzieje ...*, v. 2, p. 137.

21 *Kwestia ukraińska ...*, pp. 94–95.

“Tezy programowe w sprawie rusko-ukraińskiej” (Programmatic theses on the Ruthenian-Ukrainian issue), authored either by Józef Zieliński or Stanisław Nowotyński, were exceptionally radical. The work stipulated that after the war the goal should be to “deport [...] all those Ukrainians who directly or indirectly committed crimes of state during the current war. It will be necessary to apply the principle of collective responsibility both to those segments of Ukrainian society particularly involved in anti-Polish operations (e.g., the clergy), youth, as well as entire centres (villages) that took an active part in the massacres of the Polish population. This action should include the complete expulsion of the Ukrainian population from Lviv and the area up to at least 30 km beyond the city”²². It was also proposed that some Ukrainians be forcibly resettled to the USSR with the rest to central Poland, where they could be dispersed. Also, it was suggested that a deep reform of the Uniate Church be carried out so that it loses its Ukrainian character (for this purpose, among other things, the concordat with the Vatican was to be renegotiated, rituals were to be Latinized, and celibacy was to be introduced for Greek Catholic priests). Another idea was to order a statutory ban on state subsidies for any Ukrainian activity.

All these plans for repressive policy (or rather dreams of retaliation) could not hide the growing anxiety about the immediate future. It was becoming increasingly clear that the radical slogans of the OUN-B met with virtually fanatical support of western Ukrainian youth, who were often ready not only to make the greatest sacrifices but also commit crimes in the name of independence.

Though full responsibility for the massacres of Poles lies with the Bandera leadership, it is also worth remembering that the hostile attitude of the Polish national circles towards Ukrainians and Ukraine made it easier – at least in Eastern Galicia – for the OUN-B to gain support for its radical anti-Polish activities among its own community. It is difficult not to concede to the words of one author writing for the Social Democrat publication “Nowe Drogi” in May 1944: “We do not claim that autonomy would have prevented the slaughter, but we do claim that nothing has been done in the political field to prevent or mitigate it”²³. The following opinion from 1942, taken from the same publication, seems similarly true: “The Czerwień Territory [i.e., Eastern Galicia – G.M.] can only be saved peacefully through complete, sincere cooperation [...], and if it comes to a separation of two nations, let it be like the separation of Norway and Sweden”²⁴.

22 Lucyna Kulińska, *Dzieje ...*, v. 1, pp. 76-77.

23 Cit. per: Ryszard Torzecki, *Polska myśl ...*, p. 378.

24 TsDAHOU, c. 1, d. 23, v. 928, p. 190.

The OUN and UPA's "Polish" Orders in Eastern Galicia

Preoccupied with power struggles, the leading OUN-B organizers in Galicia were somewhat surprised by the information coming out of Volhynia. It was only the appearance of a Soviet partisan group led by Sidor Kovpak in this region that made Roman Shukhevych decide to form partisan units. However, these took on the name Ukrainian National Self-Defense (UNS) rather than UPA. One motive was to mislead the Germans and at least delay their possible repressions. The UNS was commanded by Oleksandr "Andrienko" Lutsyki. Before the mustered troops had time to coalesce, Kovpak's partisans were smashed by the Germans in the Carpathians and returned to Volhynia, thus only a few minor skirmishes were fought against them.

From the 21 to 25 of August 1943 in Żłota Swoboda village in Tarnopol Voivodeship, the OUN Third Congress was held on Shukhevych's initiative. The "Vollhynian" clique arrived there convinced that the path they had chosen (i.e., launching large guerrilla operations simultaneously against everyone) was the right one. They believed that the Soviet army would enter the western Ukrainian lands weakened and bloodied and that its successes were a testimony not to the strength of the USSR, but the weakness of the Wehrmacht – and that it would succeed in triggering an uprising that, thanks to partisan raids, would also spread to other nations of the USSR and lead to the destruction of that state. Among the delegates, however, an opposing viewpoint also existed: recognizing the USSR as a power and that there was no chance of victory in a solitary struggle against the Soviets. Proponents suggested that the moment the Red Army occupied western Ukraine, the will of the Ukrainians to have their own state should be manifested to the world through a brief armed effort against the Germans lasting a few days, followed by ... leaving the country and emigrating.

Ultimately, the concept of guerrilla warfare against the advancing Soviets won out. It was decided to expand the forest units and create underground stores of food, clothing, and weapons. As the front passed, UPA units were to be concentrated in places far from combat operations, where they would wait until the front moved west, after which they would begin raids "to the east of Ukraine and even beyond its borders to the Caucasus, and also to Belarus"¹.

1 Сергій Кокін, *Анотований покажчик...*, pp. 18-19.

The congress materials also included the statement that Ukrainians would not allow themselves to be destroyed like the Jews. This was an expression of conviction of the inevitable annihilation of the Ukrainian nation if it continued to be deprived of its own state.

During deliberations, it was finally decided to abandon the program of integral nationalism. This position was influenced on the one hand by the aversion of the people of eastern Ukraine to nationalist ideas, on the other by the international situation. It was quite widely expected at the time that the Allies would land in the Balkans. It was known that in the eyes of the Western Allies, only those circles recognizing democratic principles could hope for acceptance. Therefore, the revised program of the OUN included assurances that the future Ukrainian state would respect freedom of speech, conscience, and print. This was at most just the beginning of the OUN's democratization.

The Third Congress consolidated Shukhevych's power by approving the structural changes that had taken place within the organization. This also meant the ultimate abandonment of the idea of an uprising against Germany. Roman Shukhevych saw the main enemy in the USSR and tried to limit the anti-German operations of Ukrainian partisans. The ousted Lebed became head of the OUN-B department responsible for the organization's foreign policy. He was put in charge of the talks that the OUN-B soon began holding with Hungary, Germany, and Poland. Discussions with the Germans were the most delicate, as their exposure could mean a propaganda disaster. It would destroy the UPA's carefully cultivated image: of a formation fighting against all occupants. They were therefore conducted in secret and any attempts at local agreements made by the organization's low-rank units were suppressed. Finally, in the summer of 1944, an agreement was concluded with the Germans, under which weapons and ammunition were received in exchange for intelligence on the Soviets. In autumn, the Germans released Banderite prisoners, including Stepan Bandera himself.

A clash between supporters of Klym Savur and Mykola Lebed occurred during the Congress. In a discussion concerning the UPA, Lebed and Stepaniak concluded: "the UPA discredited itself with its banditry against the Polish population, just as the OUN discredited itself with its collaboration with the Germans"². The Volhynian delegation was probably outraged by Lebed and Stepaniak's accusations and proposed that the Volhynian experience be transferred to Galicia. The majority of the delegates sided with Kliachkovskyi. Mykhailo Stepaniak later testified: "In defence of the conduct of Klym Savur with the Poles, Horbenko, Halyna, Ivaniv, and Shuchevych spoke out especially

2 *Ibidem*, p. 19.

vigorously. [...] Since the entire Provid office came out in defence of Klym Savur, the 'Great Assembly' excused his actions, though this was not reflected in the official congress resolutions"³.

Threatening words can also be found in OUN Third Congress documents: "The Polish imperialist leadership is a servant of foreign imperialisms and an enemy of the freedom of nations. It aims at enlisting the Polish minority on Ukrainian lands and the Polish national mass [in central Poland – G.M.] in the struggle against the Ukrainian nation and assists German and Muscovite imperialism in destroying the Ukrainian nation"⁴. The dangerous similarity of these to the arguments used to justify the actions in Volhynia makes it impossible to consider it a coincidence. The Congress either decided to carry out an anti-Polish operation in Galicia or, more likely, gave Shukhevych a free hand in this matter.

Although the OUN-B considered its main enemy the USSR and therefore thought it most important to prepare for operations within the Soviet occupation zone, at the same time it still saw the Poles as enemy number two. Though official OUN-B propaganda proclaimed that the partisans were engaged in a two-front struggle against the Germans and the Soviets, Ukrainians realized that the days of German occupation were numbered and were much more concerned about the possibility of restoring the status quo in eastern Galicia that existed before September 1, 1939. The Banderites certainly could not rule out the possibility that 1918 would repeat itself and that they would have to face the Poles. Even if they assumed the Soviets would reintegrate Volhynia and eastern Galicia into the USSR, they could not be sure of it. They were aware not only of official Polish underground proclamations emphasizing the Kresy's belonging to Poland but most likely also of the secret plans for a general uprising (in the summer of 1943, after a leak within the Home Army, these fell into German hands and most likely later reached the Ukrainians as well). They knew very well that the Poles were preparing an uprising for when the front rolled through. That is why they decided to strike ruthlessly in advance at the Poles' weakest spot – the civilian population.

In October 1943, the OUN-B Provid issued a contradictory communiqué concerning the Polish-Ukrainian situation. On the one hand, it justified attacks on the Polish population pointing to the aid it allegedly provided to the Germans and Soviets "in destroying Ukrainians" (admitting between the

3 *Polacy i Ukraïncy ...*, p. 231.

4 ОУН у світлі постанов Великих Зборів, Конференцій та інших документів з боротьби 1929-1955 року (збірка документів), information on publication place not available, 1955, pp. 117-118.

lines that anti-Polish operations were being carried out), while on the other categorically stating: “neither the Ukrainian people nor the Organization have had anything to do with these killings”⁵. At the same time, all incidents of mass murder were condemned “regardless by whose hand they were committed”⁶. Interestingly, the issuance of this statement provoked the ire of Roman Shukhevych. In Stepaniak’s testimony we read: “Shukhevych ‘Tur’ condemned the results of my work very sharply [...]. He said the OUN’s approval to issue a statement condemning terrorist acts against Poles and for their cessation works to the detriment of ‘Ukrainian national interests’”⁷.

Here is what Oleksandr Lutskyi had to say about the OUN’s orders concerning Poles in Galicia in late 1943 and early 1944 after his arrest by the Soviets: “Concerning the Poles, there was a direct order to physically liquidate all ‘Home Army’ participants. We determined that the Poles in the Carpathian Mountains had begun to establish bases for ‘Home Army’ activities on the territory of western Ukraine, for which purpose several military specialists had been transferred from Warsaw. UNS troops, having discovered the places of concentration of ‘Home Army’ bases, liquidated them, capturing all correspondence and rolls of ‘Home Army’ members and sympathizers. As a result, they were all eliminated by the UNS”⁸. These words should at best be treated as a rather general description of the situation at the time. When giving his testimony, Lutskyi, for obvious reasons, was not interested in providing details. Thus, he did not mention the decision was to simply physically eliminate all Poles suspected of having ties with the underground, starting with selected representatives of the local intelligentsia, including Roman Catholic priests, nor that as Home Army bases requiring annihilation were deemed any purely Polish villages where the underground was inevitably active.

In October 1943, Roman Shukhevych travelled to Volhynia on an inspection tour. The sight of the insurgent republics, where civilian administration and schools operated and even matches with Ukrainian labels were being produced, dispelled his last doubts regarding the correctness of Klym Savur’s actions. From then on, he became, in the words of Myroslav Prokop: “a faithful defender of Volhynian tactics”⁹. At a meeting of the OUN-B leadership in

5 Władysław Filar, *Chronologia wydarzeń na Wołyniu w latach 1939-1944*, in: *Polska-Ukraina: trudne pytania*, v. 5, Warsaw 1999, p. 67.

6 Літопис УПА, v. 26, Toronto–Lviv 2001, p. 365.

7 *Polacy i Ukraincy ...*, p. 269.

8 Роман Шухевич у документах радянських органів державної безпеки (1940-1950), ed. Володимир Сергійчук, v. 1, Kyiv 2007, p. 540.

9 Мирослав Прокоп, *Напередодні незалежної України*, Нью-Йорк–Париж–Сідней–Toronto–Lviv 1993, p. 536.

December 1943, Shukhevych "gave a positive assessment of the OUN-UPA's activity in Volhynia and admitted that the work in Volhynia was organized and carried out much better than in Galicia. Shukhevych stated that the UPA formed by the Volhynian National Provid had completely proved itself and its activities had become notorious not only in Volhynia but also in the eastern lands of Ukraine, recommending, therefore, the formation of the UPA based on the UNS in the territory of Galicia. Shukhevych also gave a positive assessment of Klym Savur, stating that he had great authority among UPA members"¹⁰.

As a result, it was decided to transform the Galician UNS into a standard UPA unit. The entire partisan force was placed under a unified command structure. Shukhevych finally took full control of these units, probably already in the works during the inspection, becoming the UPA's Commander-in-Chief. Klym Savur was to continue commanding the UPA in Volhynia (which was formally a downgrade of his status, since he had theoretically commanded entirety of this formation), while Vasyl "Shelest" Sydor became leader of the guerrillas in Eastern Galicia, replacing Lutskyi in this regard. Upon taking command of the UPA, Shukhevych adopted the pseudonym "Taras Chuprynka", referring to the Ukrainian poet Hryhoryi Chuprynka who had died in partisan battles against the Bolsheviks in the 1920s.

In December 1943, the OUN-B referred to the Polish declaration of July 30 in a subsequent proclamation. As one can easily guess, the Banderites harshly criticized it, deeming only one sentence from the entire text acceptable to the Ukrainians: "We understand and appreciate the aspirations of the Ukrainian people to create an independent Ukraine".

It was probably then, in December 1943, that decisions were made to launch anti-Polish operations in Eastern Galicia. It is interesting to note the bottom-up pressures to carry these out in the autumn of that year. Up till then, liquidations had been mostly isolated incidents. It seems that this aroused dissatisfaction among the rank-and-file, who wanted to launch more extensive operations, a desire further prompted by the activity of the Polish underground. One report reads: "The anti-Polish operation should be deliberately intensified. In the last two weeks there have been more and more victims of Polish denunciations, among others, Harmash, district referent of the SB in Stanislavovsk, was caught"¹¹.

One can get the impression that the aim of at least some of the initial mass killings was to find out how the Ukrainian population would react to the anti-Polish operations. After fourteen Poles were cruelly killed on November 10, 1943,

10 *Роман Шухевич у документах...*, p. 558.

11 *TsDAHOU*, c. 63, d. 1, v. 53, p. 14.

in Błożew Górna (Dobromil county), the reactions of local Ukrainians were carefully monitored. It was noted that many people were critical of how the Poles were killed, while some even initially refused to believe that Ukrainians could have stood behind such an attack. As we shall see, the actions of the Banderites were not met with the full support of the Greek Catholic community. Perhaps it was due to the influence of public opinion that it was decided to kill only men during the anti-Polish campaign in Eastern Galicia, and this only after a leaflet distribution calling for departure from the province.

In January 1944 UNS units in Eastern Galicia began reforming into the UPA. Larger groups of youth were drawn into the forests. In February advancing Red Army troops appeared on Eastern Galicia's doorstep. Almost simultaneously with Polish troops initiating Operation Tempest, Ukrainian partisans began their massive anti-Polish operations in Eastern Galicia. From that moment on the number of attacks on Polish villages increased significantly, though this was to be only a prelude to the general de-Polonization action. At the turn of February and March, the UPA was attacking only selected villages, those which possessed self-defences and could thus pose a threat to Ukrainian partisans for example. Perhaps they wanted to avoid the Volhynian scenario, where new self-defence bases were established in some villages once the massacre began. Therefore, it was decided to attack as a priority those Polish settlements that could play the role of a "Galician Przebraż".

In March at the latest, the UPA's High Command issued an order to begin a mass action of expelling Poles throughout Eastern Galicia in early April. Members of the OUN-B serving in the Ukrainian police were to convince as many officers as possible to desert and join the partisans, out of whom it was intended to create more UPA units. In May 1944, this order, along with instructions on how the expulsion should look like, was again sent to the UPA commanders. The document was preserved in one Kyiv archive. In it we read:

Given the Polish government's official position of cooperating with the Soviets, the Poles should be removed from our lands. This is to be understood thus: give orders to the Polish population to move out within a few days to native Polish lands. If they do not comply, then send in the militia, which will liquidate them and burn (demolish) their homesteads and property. Once again, I would like to draw your attention to calling upon the Poles to leave first and only then liquidating them, not the other way around (please pay special attention to this)¹².

This text itself demonstrates that the lower echelons of the organization often disobeyed this order, killing all Poles they encountered. Greek Catholic

12 *Ibidem*, c. 3833, d. 1, v. 3, p. 53.

clergyman Father Pavlo Oliynyk put it this way: "partisan units were ordered to drive the Lakhs out of Ukrainian lands under threat of violence. [...] The partisan threats had no effect on the Polish rural population, so the partisans attacked Polish farmsteads in the villages at night or by day and killed from the youngest to the oldest"¹³.

A mass Ukrainian attack took place in the first days of April 1944, with assaults gaining particular intensity during Holy Week. Just as Easter 1943 can be considered the beginning of the mass anti-Polish operation in Volhynia, in Galicia it began on Easter 1944. As in Volhynia, the action was preceded by police desertions, including in Yavoriv district. In the coming months, the attacks on Polish towns did not cease. It was not uncommon to kill entire populations, regardless of age or sex. This happened despite the UPA command's orders to avoid murdering women and children. Additionally, we do not know of any case of even a single UPA partisan being reprimanded for this reason.

On July 10, 1944, the commander of the UPA in Eastern Galicia Vasyl "Shelest" Sydor issued a command:

I order to continually strike at the Poles until they are exterminated to their last in these lands. The sequence of anti-Polish operations: a) destruction of enemy combat power, b) activists and agents, c) retaliatory operations. Forms: a) joint troop actions on Polish concentrations, b) disruption of subunits, patrols, etc. As before, women and children must not be liquidated. In some cases, call on the Poles to leave Ukrainian lands in due time¹⁴.

Retaliatory operations were understood as attacks on Polish-populated towns. It is worth noting that in his order Shelest recommended pre-empting attacks with leaflets only in certain situations.

The scope of UPA operations was slowly moving from east to west. By the end of June 1944, it covered all districts of Eastern Galicia. Ukrainian actions were not chaotic: they were aimed at securing the best possible starting positions in case of a war with Poland. The UPA aimed at creating strong bases in the Carpathians and Ternopil province, surrounding Lviv along with its outlying towns while cutting the corridors between Lviv and Lublin.

The Polish question became the subject of discussion at the Congress of the Ukrainian Main Liberation Council, held in July 1944. This body was conceived as a cross-party political platform for the UPA. Although some voices (Zenon Pelenskyi for example) in the discussion held that "as a political element the

¹³ Павло Олійник, *Зошити*, Київ 1995, p. 87.

¹⁴ Cit. per: Олег Гайдай, Богдан Хаварівський, Володимир Ханас, *Хто пожав "Бурю"? Армія Крайова на Тернопіллі 1941-1945 рр.*, Тернопіль 1996, pp. 83-84.



Fig. 32 UPA partisans, Eastern Galicia, 1944.

Poles are not a threat”, the prevailing opinion was that of Lev Shankovskiy, who put it bluntly: “The only possible dialogue with them – is a dialogue of gun and cannon”.

Summing up the discussion, Shukhevych stated:

We are at war with the Poles in the northwestern Ukrainian lands. When Ukrainian police went underground in early 1943, the Germans directed the Polish police there alongside the SS. The Polish police conducted operations with the SS, using cruel and inhumane methods. The Polish element scattered across Volhynia fully paralyzed UPA movement. An answer to this was given by the population of Volhynia itself – it transferred action onto the populace. The Poles went on the defensive. Then **the liquidation of the Polish population in Volhynia began** [emphasis – G.M.] ending in the summer of 1943. From April 1944 [...] UPA command issued an order to deport Poles if they did not resettle on their own. The attacks continue. [...] Women perished only by chance [...]. In the Kholm land, about 2,000 Ukrainians, women and children, were killed by Poles in March and April of this year [...]. Our troops are currently safeguarding the lives of Ukrainians and Ukrainian territory there. [...] We are creating comfortable positions for ourselves that cannot be gained via any “green tables” [talks – G.M.]. We will not allow ourselves to be deceived. The Ukrainian masses are in our hands¹⁵.

Although it is not known whether Shukhevych was responsible for the massacres in Volhynia, as we can see, he eventually certainly approved of anti-Polish

15 Літопис УПА, v. 26, Toronto–Lviv 2001, pp. 461–514.

operations in that region. In the case of Eastern Galicia on the other hand, he actively participated in the decision-making process for de-Polonization, pushing for its implementation. He also certainly supervised the anti-Polish purges there, which were personally directed by Vasyl "Shelest" Sydor," his trusted subordinate from the "Nachtigall" battalion.

Ukrainian activists attached great importance to the role of propaganda. They were well aware of the importance of the international public's perception of events. It is worth quoting at this point a statement made by one "senior OUN member", which probably reflected the views of some portion of Banderite organizers:

Expel westwards the Mazurians, the colonists who were brought to our land by the Polish government, burn them away with fire and iron, if they do not want to leave voluntarily – so be it. Destroy the leaders [...] in towns or purely Polish villages; in retaliation for assaults, they carry out on our people, designate a few dozen or so Polish heads [...] and conduct yourselves strictly – this is the right path. For murdering our people in the Kholm land, send a strong militia there – let it fight with the Polish militia. Carry out appropriate actions there on the Poles, though not equitably – as they kill our priests, teachers, lawyers, village heads, shop stewards, etc. Here meanwhile they kill the poor, who have never taken part in political life – it is a game of blindman's bluff. To kill people only because they are Roman Catholics, regardless of whether they are women, children, or the old, while allowing the Polish element capable of fighting [...] to gather in towns – this is madness. [...] There is still time to abandon this path. What has happened up to now – blame it on the Germans, the Bolshevik partisans, the war, etc¹⁶.

However, the OUN-B leadership believed that it was possible to both carry out a purge and win the whole thing in propaganda terms. On the one hand, anti-Polish operations were justified by remarks like: "Our nation is doing what great countries do". On the other, being aware of the controversial character of their actions, they called for "concealing what was being done"¹⁷. The policy of accomplished facts therefore continued to be ruthlessly pursued, while at the same time, from the massacre's beginning, propaganda strategies were prepared that were not only to justify Ukrainian actions but also to shift responsibility for them onto the Polish side.

Anti-Polish operations were thus always justified, including in official orders of upper OUN and UPA command, by the real and alleged cooperation of Poles with the Germans and Soviets. Later, reference would also be made to the murders of Ukrainians in the Chełm region, which had allegedly been carried

¹⁶ *Polacy i Ukraińcy ...*, p. 343.

¹⁷ *Літопис УПА*, v. 26, pp. 461-514.

out on a mass scale since 1941. The need for revenge for acts of Polish retaliation was frequently cited as the justification for the various assaults, creating a chronological sequence of events in which Poles were invariably the first to commit open violence. A good example of this is a propaganda brochure by OUN activist Myroslav Prokop: *Kudy priamuyut Poliaky?* (Where are the Poles headed?). In it the actions of the UPA were presented as a defensive reaction to the “Polish terror” and attempts to seize Ukrainian lands. According to this account, it was the Polish underground that first started killing Ukrainian civilians, which provoked a spontaneous revolt of the Ukrainian population, who confronted the oppressors. It was not until later that UPA units joined the action. While denying the possibility of Ukrainians committing war crimes, all Polish crimes were meticulously noted down with the intention of using them for propaganda. One plan was to publish a special “White Book” with descriptions of the Polish underground’s misconduct towards Ukrainians. It was to be published simultaneously in Ukrainian, Polish, and French.

In this context, one certain event is worth mentioning. When interrogated by the Soviets, one of Shukhevych’s liaison officers, Katarzyna Michalkiewicz, described a special task which she had received from the UPA commander at the beginning of 1944. She was to visit villages in Volhynia where “German SS men” had liquidated large numbers of Polish and Ukrainian people, to “procure” witnesses who would confirm that the perpetrators of these crimes were communist partisans, i.e. Russians. Here is what she testified: “I fulfilled Shukhevych’s order, I found fictitious witnesses and created the relevant documents”¹⁸. It seems unlikely that the OUN-B was preparing materials to whitewash German crimes. Much closer to the truth seems to be the assumption that this case concerned Polish villages slaughtered by the UPA.

All instructions regarding anti-Polish operations were treated as strictly confidential, and no mention was ever made in official statements of the existence of top-down orders calling for the “removal” of Poles. This veil of secrecy was so tight that even after the fall of communism in the 1990s, Banderite activists still alive at the time firmly denied the existence of such orders, claiming they were the invention of people unfavourable towards an independent Ukraine.

18 State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF), c. 9478, d. 1, v. 397, pp. 65-66.

The Galician Massacre

The anti-Polish Operation in Eastern Galicia

16.1 The First Assaults

In the summer of 1943, Father Józef Anczarski, who was staying in Skalat, noted:

The shadow of Volhynia has fallen on our territories. What will happen when gangs arise and start murdering us? This is the question that constantly imposes itself on every Pole. What will happen tomorrow, the day after tomorrow, or the night after perhaps? People's hearts are filled with a terrible fear for the nearest future [...]. The Ukrainians meanwhile mock the Poles and spread rumours that increase that fear¹.

These worries were soon to materialize. The harbinger of a mass anti-Polish campaign was a wave of individual murders that began to sweep through Eastern Galicia in mid-1943. The choice of victims was initially determined by their position within the Polish community. It is possible the murders also were a way to settle personal scores. Władysław Cichocki, an associate of the Polish Welfare Committee in Chortkiv, jotted this down on November 22, 1943:

The Ukrainians, drunk on complete impunity, consistently carry out their work of destroying the Polish population, murdering in broad daylight priests, doctors, foresters, postmasters, clerks, farm managers, farmers, any Poles in general².

For example, on July 17, 1943, OUN militias murdered Julian Burakowski, head of the post office in Torske. On the night of August 3, a tobacco factory instructor in Yahilnytsia, one Kostecki, was killed while on a business trip to Chernelytsia. On the night of September 15, a post office and orphanage were attacked in Limna (Turka district) and three people, including a mailman, were murdered. In mid-October, former teacher Stanisław Weiss, who was employed as a foresting quality control inspector, was killed in Hanaczów. As he allotted timber several Ukrainians approached him and, after reading out his sentence, shot

1 Ks. Józef Anczarski, *Kronikarskie zapisy z lat cierpień i grozy w Małopolsce Wschodniej 1939-1946*, Kraków 1996, pp. 292-293.

2 *Antypolska akcja nacjonalistów ukraińskich w Małopolsce Wschodniej w świetle dokumentów Rady Głównej Opiekuńczej 1943-1944*, eds. Lucyna Kulińska, Adam Roliński, Kraków 2003, p. 47.

him with a pistol. On October 25, during a trip from Zalışchyky to Tovste, tax collector Stanisław Zieliński was killed.

Many liquidation actions were directed against priests. On September 8, Father Władysław Biliński of the Kotowo parish in Berezhany district disappeared without a trace. He was attacked while riding his bicycle between Liliatyń and Bażnikówka and dragged into the forest following a struggle. That same month, two other priests (Father Stanisław Szkodziński and Father Bronisław Majka) were abducted and killed near the woods during an OUN attack on Tovste. Postmaster Wilk with his wife and telegrapher Adamski were murdered there at the same time. On September 28-29, the presbytery of Father Roman Dacy (Home Army pseudonym: "Longin") in Żurawiki was attacked. According to Jerzy Węgierski, "he was hated by the Ukrainians for re-Polonizing that village"³. When the residents of the presbytery heard banging at the door, the priest's mother pushed him into a hollow under the floor, saving his life. However, she and the housekeeper did not survive – both were killed by the Banderites. On October 12 Father Tadeusz Stroński of the parish in Skomorochy Stare and Father Antoni Wierzbowski of the parish in Byble (Rohatyn district) were killed.

In May of 1944, the Polish underground estimated that "the Roman Catholic clergy of the Lviv archdiocese had lost 32 priests so far at the hands of Ukrainians (4 at the hands of the Germans). These were the most energetic and highly militant individuals, with great leadership skills, and their loss was always an acute calamity for the parish"⁴.

Many killings targeted foresters. The forest service naturally knew its way around the area under its jurisdiction and, depending on its sympathies, became either a valuable ally or serious threat to the partisans. This probably explains why the UPA treated the liquidation of foresters in Eastern Galicia as a priority task, often killing them together with their families. At the end of July 1943 in Vikno (Horodenka, Kolomyia district) forester Bożemski and three other people were killed. On August 2, 1943, in the middle of the day on the Dniester River in Beremiany, a forester from the village of Duliby, one Kazimierz Pleszynowicz, was killed. On August 9, the family of forester Welfe (five people in total) was murdered and plundered in Turza Wielka. In early August, in Rosochacz near Zawadka (Turka district), the family of the forester Michał Sztogrzyn was killed. A total of four people died – besides the forester, also his wife Franciszka, daughter Maria (age 24) and son Kazimierz (age 13). These are only some examples of foresters' murders.

3 Jerzy Węgierski, *W lwowskiej Armii Krajowej*, Warsaw 1989, p. 73.

4 Cit. per: *Kwestia ukraińska i eksterminacja ludności polskiej w Małopolsce Wschodniej ...*, p. 103.



Fig. 33 The Karpia family from Lytiachi/Latacz village, Ternopil province, murdered by the UPA in December 1943.

Unable to abandon their posts due to a German decree, the foresters began moving their families into the towns, while also trying to organize their self-defence. The security measures taken did bring some results. When on November 18 the forest inspectorate in Sokółówka (Zolochiv district) was attacked, fifteen Poles put up a resistance. A fierce battle ensued, which according to one account lasted until midnight, according to another – until morning. A gamekeeper and one official were killed in the fight, but several (possibly as many as ten) attackers also perished. Around midnight a ceasefire was announced. In exchange for the release of two hostages – a woman and child (according to another account there were five hostages) – the Ukrainians were permitted to collect their dead and wounded and withdraw.

The night of January 27, 1944, saw a spree of attacks on foresters. It was then that an attack on a forester's lodge in Żelechów (Kamianka-Strumilova district) took place, during which forest engineer Skawiński, his wife, and daughter were abducted into the woods. That same night Ukrainians attacked the Grabowa forest inspectorate, captured the staff leaving work and murdered five Poles, including forester J. Orzechowski. A forester, apprentice forester, accountant, and two gamekeepers were killed in the forest inspectorate in Grabowa, Kamianka Strumilova district. In Mosty Wielkie, Lviv district,

17 Poles were killed, including two families of foresters and the family of a gamekeeper. Eight people were wounded. At the beginning of 1944, a total of 73 foresters and gamekeepers were killed by the OUN-B and UPA, often together with their families. Another concentrated attack was carried out during the night of February 3, when “in Brody, Kamionec, and Sokal districts [...] 120 forester lodges were attacked simultaneously”⁵.

At the end of 1943, the first mass killings of Poles took place. On October 8 the village of Natreba in Tarnopol Voivodeship, situated on the border with Volhynia, was attacked at about 7.30 PM by a UPA unit. Doors and windows were axed, houses were burned, while possessions, particularly cattle and horses, were stolen. Luckily for the Poles, a Grenzschutz troop came to the inhabitant's rescue from Novyky. Coming under fire, the Ukrainians retreated. Seventeen Poles were nonetheless killed. On Christmas Day 1943 in Kruhów (Zolochiv district), UPA members, posing as carolers, burst into the village and killed fifteen Poles and two Ukrainians invited to Christmas Eve. The first victim was the commander of the local self-defence, which indicates the attackers were well prepared. During the night of January 15 in the village of Markowa (Podhajce district), priest Mikołaj Ferenc and his housekeeper were murdered along with fifty-five other people, mostly men. The Poles were killed “in a bestial way with axes and beet knives, even though the perpetrators had firearms”⁶.

The Polish underground, assessing the year of 1943, noted four directions of Ukrainian operations:

The first goal is exterminating the more prominent Poles, regardless of what stratum they belong to – the intelligentsia, workers, bourgeoisie, peasants. The aim is [...] to eliminate people [...] capable of influencing their environment and organizing self-defence. [...] The second goal is to murder Polish priests, who are regarded as the natural leaders of Polishness. [...] The third goal is to liquidate the Polish forestry service, i.e. forest engineers, gamekeepers, etc. This constitutes a deliberate cleansing of forests to allow the Ukrainian bands organizing there to move more freely. [...] Since mid-December [1943], the Ukrainians have begun implementing their fourth objective – the biological extermination of the entire Polish population, regardless of its activity or passivity⁷.

The first mass murders in Galicia had various causes. Some were probably a response to the actions of the Polish underground. In a ban (!) on conducting

5 Archiwum Akt Nowych (AAN), Zespół Delegatura Rządu, 202/III/121, p. 106.

6 *Antypolska akcja nacjonalistów ...*, pp. 15, 22-23.

7 *Wołyń. Galicja Wschodnia 1943-1944. Przewodnik po polskich i ukraińskich źródłach archiwalnych*, v. 1, Warsaw-Kyiv 2003, illustration 17 of the Polish part.

major anti-Polish operations issued in December 1943, one local OUN-B leader, "Zboi" (N.N.), at the same time recommended that for every Ukrainian killed, they punish "10 Poles, who should not be shot but rather hacked up with axes and disposed of in the open"⁸. In individual cases, attacks were treated as "exercises" for the planned de-Polonization operation. They were meant to immunize OUN-B and UNS-UPA members, as well as the surrounding Ukrainian population, against the horrors of the planned ethnic cleansing. Most assaults were probably carried out by Volhynian UPA units that had carried out raids in Galicia, transferring Volhynian "battle tactics" to the new area.

By the end of 1943, up to a thousand people had died at the hands of the OUN. At the same time, a war of nerves began – more and more frequent became calls, verbal and written, for Poles to leave westwards, otherwise risking death. As time passed, people began realizing that the advertised slaughter could take place at any moment. The prelude to the massacre this time around would be the activation of the Galician UPA units.

16.2 A Microhistory: The Sotnia Siromantsi Expedition

One of the best-known UPA units in Eastern Galicia was a sotnia code-named the "Siromantsi". It was formed in October of 1943 in the Carpathian Mountains near Dolyna. Its core consisted exclusively of OUN-B members who had been trained in the UPA's "Tyhry" ("Tigers") NCO school. It was headed by former Red Army senior lieutenant Dmytro "Yastrub" Karpenko, who hailed from eastern Ukraine. As UPA documents emphasize, Yastrub was well acquainted with the military craft and possessed a humorous disposition in private.

Following intensive training, the Siromantsi sotnia was assigned to the operational region of Tarnopol Voivodeship. In the first weeks of 1944, on the order of UPA command, the sotnia set out on a raid into Eastern Galicia. Over a few months, it combed through the entire region, reaching Lubaczów. At the turn of January and February 1944, the unit appeared in Peremyshliany district. The local OUN-B network decided to take advantage of this UPA unit's presence to attack Hanaczów, a large, now-defunct Polish village where a strong Home Army outpost was cooperating with a group of Jewish partisans hiding in the area. The UPA attack took place on February 2 at 9 PM. The Ukrainians captured houses on the outskirts of the village but were unable to reach the strongly defended centre. The UPA men forced their way into homesteads and killed any people they found inside. The Home Army was supported in

8 TsDAVOVU, c. 3896, d. 1, v. 4, p. 23.

their fight by the Jewish partisans of Abram “Bunia” Baum’s unit. The UPA men withdrew around midnight. According to Polish intel, 63 people were killed, of whom at least 33 were women and children. About a hundred people were wounded. The losses of the attackers were estimated at thirty killed and wounded. However, different data appears in Ukrainian reports: “On the night of February 3 the Sotnia Siromantsi carried out retaliatory operations against the Polish village of Hanaczów, d[istrict] Peremyshliany. Over 180 Lakhs were killed, about 200 wounded, while the rest perished in the flames. 80% of the village was burned. Only the brick houses and church survived. The “Lashnia” put up fierce resistance. [...] We did not sustain any casualties”⁹.



Fig. 34 A Jewish partisan unit in Hanachiv/Hanaczów, 1944.

On February 9 the Sotnia Siromantsi probably attacked the village of Podkamień Rohatynski (Pidkamin), killing sixteen Poles there. Several days later the unit received orders to carry out a retaliatory action in the village of Ludwikówka. The immediate cause of the attack was said to be two events: “a Polish denunciation” – as a result of which OUN member Vasyl Figurka was arrested by the Germans and shot back in May 1942 (!); and a skirmish with Poles that occurred on February 15, 1944 (in which an OUN member was lightly wounded). These facts served as justification for the decision to attack

⁹ TsDAHOU, c. 57, d. 4,teczka 338, p. 411.

and destroy this village. The raid was carried out by a sotnia of sixty men supported by ten local OUN militiamen. The assault came simultaneously from four directions. The Ukrainians set 180 households on fire and killed, according to their own estimate, 330 people – including 295 men, 30 women, and 5 children (Polish losses possibly stood at “only” around 200 people). The UPA did not suffer any casualties.

On February 19 the sotnia carried out simultaneous attacks on Fraga and Pidkamin for the second time. In Fraga, the UPA estimated that twenty-three men were killed, while thirty-two men, six women, and two children were killed in Pidkamin. Polish sources speak of sixty-eight deaths. In Pidkamin, the Poles attempted to defend themselves with axes. According to one combat report: “it should be noted that a large number of Poles hid among some of the Ukrainian families, in this way saving their lives”¹⁰.

On February 23 the Siromantsi came to the aid of a patrol composed of volunteers of the SS “Galizien” division, which had fallen into a Home Army ambush near Huta Pieniacka. The UPA’s support enabled the Galician SS subunit to retreat and most probably saved it from utter destruction. This amounted to a death sentence on the inhabitants of Huta. On February 28 a punitive SS expedition razed the village to the ground. The soldiers of the SS “Galizien” division were assisted in the pacification by members of the local OUN and a mysterious “Vollhynian UPA unit”. It cannot be ruled out that in reality, this referred to the Siromantsi.

In March and April, the sotnia continued to initiate raids in the field, taking part in further anti-Polish operations about which we have no information. It is known that after reaching the districts of Rava-Ruska and Lubaczów it took part in battles against the Home Army in this area.

The unit suffered an embarrassing defeat on May 11 in a clash during a German round-up in the village of Kariv – an event that can only be explained by the UPA’s ambivalent attitude towards the Germans. Upon the Germans’ arrival in Kariv, the sotnia was busy conducting drills. Yastrub ordered that the Germans be told to withdraw. What happened next probably took him completely by surprise. The Germans split into two groups. The first group blocked off the road into the forest, while the second entered the village in cars at full speed. The efficiently conducted attack forced the partisans to retreat in the direction of Domashiv. When it turned out, however, that there were German units in this village as well, a portion of the UPA men threw down their weapons. The sotnia lost eight men with four partisans wounded. As many as forty people surrendered.

10 TsDAVOVU, c. 3836, d. 1, v. 66, p. 43.

The defeat in Kariv did not prevent the sotnia from conducting further anti-Polish operations. By May 21 the unit, together with another UPA sotnia, was taking part in an attack on Home Army-defended Andrzejówka and Narol, capturing the former at the cost of three dead and ten wounded. Several dozen Poles were killed. During the night of July 19, an assault was made on the village of Wielkie Oczy. Either thirteen or eighteen Poles were murdered there; the rest took refuge in the church, where a defence was organized. An assault on the church was made futile by Polish machine gun fire and the UPA retreated, burning eighty houses. In neighbouring Żmijowskie seven Poles and a Ukrainian were killed that same day. Reporting on this attack, Yastrub opened with the following sentence: "Out of Wielkie Oczy (literally "big eyes") we have made Małe Oczy ("little eyes") ..."

According to Mariusz Zajączkowski's findings, the stopping of a passenger train near Bełżec in June 1944 and the killing of forty-two Polish passengers was probably the work of Yastrub's sotnia. The photographs of the victims of that attack are often used today to illustrate UPA crimes.

The arrival of the Red Army forced the UPA units to cease their operations and hole up in the forests. In September 1944, the Siromantsi stationed near Univ in Peremyshliany district – where they were surrounded by subunits of the NKVD's 19th Internal Troops Brigade, consisting of about four hundred and fifty soldiers. On September 30 a fierce battle took place between the NKVD and UPA. Between 9 and 11 PM, the Soviets launched over twenty attacks, all of which were repulsed. The partisans counterattacked a dozen or so times. During the night, despite the encirclement line being sealed, the UPA men split into small groups and "filtered through" the tightening noose, departing in the direction of Pniatyn. When the Soviets realized what had happened, they sent a hunting party of fifty men supported by light tanks, which caught up with the partisans in Pniatyn at the moment they were resting and cooking food. Yastrub repulsed the Soviet attack, personally damaging one of the tanks with an anti-tank gun. The partisans would admit that their losses came to seventeen dead and twenty-five wounded near Univ and seven dead and eight wounded at Pniatyn. On the NKVD side, there were six dead and thirty-two wounded.

In autumn of 1944, the Siromantsi returned to their original operational region in Tarnopol Voivodeship. Yastrub would become the first UPA member to be awarded the Golden Cross of Merit and was appointed commander of a *kurin* (battalion) consisting of four sotnias, including the Siromantsi troops. He did not enjoy his new post for long, though, as he was killed on December 17



Fig. 35 Photographs of victims of a slaughter committed by the UPA on Polish train passengers travelling from Rawa Ruska to Bełżec, June 16, 1944.

in battle against the Soviets during an attack on the district centre of Novi Strylishcha.

Afterwards, the Sotnia Siromantsi, commanded by one “Kosach” (N.N.), fought against the Soviets until 1946, when it was disbanded. At the end of 1944 and the beginning of 1945, it took part, alongside its entire kurin, in subsequent attacks on Poles. In 1947, the Ukrainian underground prepared a special chronicle detailing the unit. However, as per the OUN-B’s adopted politics of memory, it failed to mention any of the attacks on the Polish population, focusing instead on operations against the Soviets.

16.3 Mass “Cleansing of the Polish Element”

From February 1944 on, the number of attacks on the Polish population began to increase exponentially. More and more UPA units and whole OUN districts joined the anti-Polish operation. On February 5 after 8 PM, nineteen Poles were killed in Słobódka Bołszowiecka (Rohatyn district). During the night of February 9, UPA units attacked Czyżów in Zolochiv district. The attackers shot twenty people. On the night of February 10, the UPA murdered sixty Poles in Bokowo (Pidhaitsi district). On February 15 in Firlejów, seventy-five Poles were murdered, twenty-five more wounded. On February 16 in Słobódka Wasylkowiecka, eight people were killed. Among the victims was “one baby, whose little arms the thugs had broken and nailed to its cradle”¹¹.

Father Stanisław Szczepankiewicz, the parish priest in Ihrovysia, wrote the following to the archbishop’s Curia in Lviv on February 26, 1944:

At 11 AM on the night of 23 February, about 300 people armed in various ways (clubs, axes, and firearms) attacked Berezowica Mała, murdering solely 131 Poles, not counting those severely scalded, as over 40 people were burned alive after being tied up (women and children). A horrible and terrifying sight – guts ripped out with knives and children pierced through with stakes. The Poles who managed to escape from Berezowica M[ała] flee as quickly as possible becoming homeless wanderers. Berezowica is 8 km away from Ihrowica. Feverishness and terror have gripped Ihrowica – fear and panic fuelled by threats like: “the same will happen here”¹².

11 *Kwestia ukraińska ...*, p. 59.

12 F. Józef Wołczański, *Eksterminacja narodu polskiego i kościoła rzymskokatolickiego przez ukraińskich nacjonalistów w Małopolsce Wschodniej w latach 1939-1945. Materiały źródłowe*, v. I, Kraków 2005, pp. 426-427.

These threats were not unfounded, though Ihrovitsia would have to wait several more months “for its turn”.

On February 28 the UPA attacked Korostiatyn in Buchach district. UPA men (probably from the sotnia of “Siri Vovky”) attacked the village and its railroad station simultaneously. The attackers were armed with axes and other weapons, with which they killed the railroad officials and their families, along with travellers awaiting the train. Twenty-one people were killed, including one accidentally targeted Ukrainian. Eighty meters of railroad tracks were also torn up. At the same time, other UPA men slaughtered Poles in the village. It was only the arrival of a Polish partisan unit from Puźnik that made the UPA retreat. In Korostiatyn 135 Poles were murdered.

On March 9, Polish settlers who had been resettled by the Germans from the area of Rava-Ruska were attacked in Szerokie Pole. Twenty-four houses were burned down and fifty-eight people murdered. On March 12 the village of Majdan in the Kopychyntsi district was attacked, leading to the death of thirty-five Poles. On the night of March 24 in the village of Białe (Peremyshliany district), the UPA murdered eighty Poles. Throughout March in Kopychyntsi district, twenty-five Poles were murdered in Czarnokoniecka Wola, ten in Celejów, forty-five in Jabłonowo, thirty in Kociubińczyki, and fifty in Oryszkowce. Also in March, the village of Huta Werchobudzka was assaulted four times, forcing its inhabitants to evacuate. Yustyn Dovhan testified: “2 weeks after the destruction of the village of Huta Pieniacka, our band, together with the Volhynian UPA band and UPA bands from neighbouring villages, attacked and pogromed the village of Huta Werchobudzka [...]. As a result of the pogrom, about 60-70 houses were burnt [...]. About 100 inhabitants were killed [...].”¹³

One of March's larger massacres occurred at the Dominican monastery in Pidkamin. At the start of March, the monastery found itself just behind the front line. The Germans were becoming alarmed by the existence of an armed self-defence there, thus demanding the Poles hand over their weapons. The Poles gave up only a portion of their armaments. Meanwhile, the Germans struck an agreement with the kurin of Maks “Maks” Skorupskyi, which had just arrived from Volhynia, to cooperate against the Soviets. At the same time, they proposed that “the kurin should occupy Pidkamin”¹⁴, to which the Ukrainians agreed. On March 11 the Germans left the town. Towards the evening of that day, the Ukrainians approached the monastery, where they demanded food and to be let in past the gates. The Poles gave them food but refused entry. Under the cover of night, part of the population crept out of the monastery. The next day

13 *Polacy i Ukraińcy ...*, p. 981.

14 *Ibidem*, pp. 990-991.

around 9 AM, when the Poles once again refused to open the monastery gate, its buildings were strafed with machine gunfire. The Poles tried to resist – they responded by firing their own weapons, throwing a couple of grenades, possibly killing several of the attackers. Soon after, the UPA men ceased firing and demanded that everyone leave the monastery, promising the Poles that they would be set free. As the Poles began leaving, the UPA men opened fire once more and, taking advantage of the confusion, rushed past the gates, killing any people they encountered. About one hundred people perished. A number of Poles were also killed inside the town. The plundering of the monastery lasted several days. Despite all this, a dozen or so people survived in the attic, eating nothing but snow for several days.



Fig. 36 The Dominican Monastery in Pidkamin/Podkamień, photograph taken during the interwar period.

In April 1944, during Holy Week, the UPA launched a massed anti-Polish operation throughout Eastern Galicia. It made use of the Volhynian “experiences” from the spring of 1943 when Janowa Dolina was attacked on Easter. On April 2, an OUN regional militia and the UPA Haidamak sotnia attacked the colony of Zelemianka in Stanislawovsk region, killing about forty Poles and burning fifty-two farms. On the night of April 3, the Ukrainians attacked the village of Rumno (Rudka district). Sixty homesteads were burned and twenty-seven people were killed. On April 4, the Haidamaks along with district militias attacked Polish colonies located between Perkozy and Protesy, killing about twenty people. On April 6, sixty-five people were murdered in the village of Dołha

Wojniłowska. On April 6 in Strychanka (Kamianka Strumilova district) Polish farmsteads were torched and five Poles killed. On the night of April 6, the UPA attacked the village of Mosberg in Shklo district. Thirty-one Poles died. That same night, Pyszówka village was burned to the ground (forty-five farms). Fifty-two people perished, mostly in the flames or as a result of asphyxia. In the village of Lisko (Kamianka district) thirteen to eighteen Poles were killed. In Zhovkva district, Ukrainians attacked the villages of Fujna, Wola Wysocka, Wiązowa, Lipina, Janówka, Majdanek, Dzibułki, Żuzy, Macoszyn, Skwarzawa, Mosty, and Zameczek over the first two weeks of April.

On the night of Easter, April 9-10, the UPA launched numerous attacks on Polish villages in many of Galicia's districts. The Haidamaks and a district militia attacked the village of Tomaszowce at 9 PM, burning three hundred farmsteads and killing about forty people. On the same night, a "slew of people" were killed in Pniaki in Kalush district, while in Sokołów, 15 km from Stryi, half the houses were burned and five people murdered. In Drohobych district, an OUN militia attacked the village of Zady:

The operation began at 11.30 PM with the encirclement of the village from all sides; at the same time, the fifth group, headed by the militia commander, entered the village center. Women and children were left alone. Each of the groups encircling the village [...] cleared their designated houses. The action ended at 2.30 in the morning. All Polish farmsteads (52), a school, and the village office were burned. Killed were 30 men, 5 women (actively resisting). An unknown number of men died in the flames¹⁵.

In Hanaczów, following the first attack on it mentioned earlier, the Home Army intensified its defensive preparations. On the night of April 9, the UPA managed to capture the nearby village of Hanaczówka and the hamlets of Zagórze and Podkamienna by midnight, killing the inhabitants. The attack on Hanaczów itself came mainly from the east. The Ukrainian partisans captured the houses at the edge of the village (the wife and five children of Michał Nieckarz, aged from one to seven, were bayoneted to death there; Nieckarz himself was seriously wounded), but were separated from the village centre by a meadow and water-filled ditch. As UPA men approached the Polish positions, they were halted by machine gunfire. Around 5 AM the Ukrainians launched another assault, this time from the west, but were repulsed once more. In the morning the defenders were reinforced by the Home Army unit of Lieutenant "Strzała". The Polish counterattack created confusion in the UPA ranks but was broken by fire from five machine guns. Around 7.30 AM UPA soldiers launched

15 TsDAHOU, c. 57, d. 4, v. 338, p. 412.

another attack in the direction of the mill, located southwest of the village centre. They were stopped by a Polish counterattack, in which one Jewish partisan was killed. At about 9 o'clock the UPA men began retreating. The Poles estimated that Ukrainian losses were between thirty and seventy dead. The Poles lost sixty-six people, twenty-six of whom died in Hanaczów (including the Jewish partisan mentioned above), the remainder in the hamlets¹⁶.

A decision was made to evacuate the village after the attack, but all attempts to leave ended in clashes with the UPA. The activity of the Polish self-defence and rumours of the presence of Soviet partisans in the village finally brought on German repressions against Hanaczów. On May 2 a German pacification expedition destroyed the remains of the village. Sixteen Home Army soldiers and about thirty civilians were killed. The younger men were taken to prison. The surviving inhabitants were driven out.

On April 12 the UPA, supported by SKW units from neighbouring villages, attacked Hucisko (Bibrka district). One hundred and one Poles were murdered. A report by the Rada Główna Opiekuńcza (a charity organization) reads: "The attackers exerted their cruelty: they sawed, dug out eyeballs, tore waists, burned the men. Many women were also killed"¹⁷. On April 18 an OUN militia killed thirteen Poles (only men) in the village of Mejnycz (Sambir district). At the end of April, the hamlets of Gawliki, Brzezina, Ptaszniki, and Polish farmsteads in the village of Doliny Dobrotworskie in the Kamianka district were put to flame. Over twenty Poles were killed. In the same month, the UPA also attacked Horpin in Kamianka district. Polish farmsteads, a church, and an orphanage run by nuns were torched. Thirty-one people of Polish nationality were killed there. Eleven people died in Humniska in the same district, twenty-one in Łany Polskie, twenty-three in Łapajówka, fifteen in Różanka, sixteen in Ruda Sielecka, and twenty five in Konstantynówka.

In early May, Ukrainian nationalists attacked the village of Derżów in Stryi district. Here we can consult both Polish and Ukrainian documents. Polish documentation reads: "the band murdered 65 people, mostly elders, women, and children. The men defended themselves, killing 2 attackers. [...] 20 people and 3 nuns were murdered in the church, while the entire internal installation of the church was burned"¹⁸; whereas Ukrainian documents state: "Yavor's group from the local district militia encircled the village of Derzhiv, where many Poles lived, to begin a purge of the Polish element. The Poles fled to the church and locked themselves inside. Others holed up in the houses and it was

16 Jerzy Węgierski, *W łwowskiej ...*, pp. 105-108.

17 *Antypolska akcja nacjonalistów ...*, p. 167.

18 *Raport z Ziemi Wschodnich* no. 39, p. 5.

difficult to get inside. Because of this, we began burning huts, as well as the church, where the Poles had locked themselves in and could not be taken alive. The fleeing Poles were shot at [...], and a few Ukrainians who fled with the Poles were also killed. Sixty Poles were shot during the operation"¹⁹. Sixteen more Poles from Derżów were killed by the Banderites in the nearby woods, where they attempted to hide.

On May 4th an OUN militia murdered eight Poles in the village of Komarniki in Turka district. As the OUN commander lamented: "The remainder fled into the fields because with so many people it was impossible to properly surround the entire village"²⁰. In another OUN report, we read: "In Zadviria the Poles received an ultimatum on 12 May, and that night 13 men and 4 women were liquidated. This had such an effect that all the Poles left the same day"²¹.

On May 22, around 5 AM, the UPA attacked Bryńce Zagórne (Bibrka district) in Lviv province. One hundred and twenty to one hundred and forty-five Poles were cruelly murdered. Their houses were set aflame. On May 24, Ukrainians killed fifteen Poles in the village of Batiatycze (Kamianka district). In Rudki district, six Polish villages were burned on the night of June 13. On the night of July 16, the UPA attacked Krasne village (Skalat district). Fifty-two Poles were murdered and about one hundred different buildings were incinerated. The survivors were those who managed to hide inside the local church and rectory.

The UPA also attempted assaults on towns. In early 1944, Zbarazh was spared from a massacre by a snowstorm that paralyzed Ukrainian preparations. On May 6, Ukrainian partisans attacked the suburb of Dolyna, "committing unprecedented rapes on young Polish girls, then burning the dead"²². About twenty people were slaughtered. On May 8 the UPA attacked a suburb of Busk, Voliany. Most of the Polish buildings were burned and two people killed. On the night of May 25, the UPA attacked the town of Lopatyn in Radekhiv district. Eleven Poles were murdered and several wounded. On July 2, leaflets "reproaching hospitality" for the Poles appeared in Gródek Jagielloński. Around Brzeżany, within a radius of four kilometres, UPA placed guards on the roads, preventing peasants from bringing food to the town.

In July of 1944 anti-Polish operations even began in the Bieszczady Mountains, where at least two hundred-two hundred and fifty people were murdered before the arrival of Soviet troops. The most notorious slaughter

19 TsDAVOVU, c. 3833, d. 1, v. 157, p. 62.

20 *Polacy i Ukraińcy* ..., p. 1059.

21 Cit. per: *Polacy i Ukraińcy* ..., p. 1087.

22 *Kwestia ukraińska* ..., p. 106.



Fig. 37
Volodymyr “Burlaka” Shchihelskyi.
Photograph from 1946.

took place in Baligród, where the newly formed UPA sotnia of Volodymyr “Burlaka” Shchihelskyi shot forty-two people.

These are just selected examples of attacks. It is worth mentioning that killed alongside Poles were the Jews they were hiding. According to OUN-B plans, Jews were to be “forcibly displaced”. However, by the time the UPA became a significant force, the Holocaust had already run its course. Resettlement plans were therefore outdated before the Ukrainians had a chance to carry them out. In light of this, the Ukrainian partisans decided to use the surviving Jews for their own purposes, taking on specialists: doctors, dentists, and craftsmen. Though some of them seemingly did join the UPA, like Dr. Samuel Nojman, probably killed in battle against the Soviets in July 1945 at Czarny Las, or Szaja Warm, arrested on August 9, 1944, and sentenced to twenty years at a labour camp for his association with the nationalists, most were killed once the front passed through. Any Jews deemed “useless” were probably killed as well. Although some Ukrainian historians deny this, maintaining emphatically that UPA units held quite the track record of rescuing Jews, the reality of these killings is also confirmed by underground documents. From a Soviet-obtained report of OUN Security Service officer “Zhburk”, it appears that the SB issued an order stating that “all Jews – who are not specialists – should be liquidated

conspiratorially, so that neither Jews nor our people know the truth, but rather spread propaganda of their defection to the Bolsheviks”²³. In an order to “Colleague ‘Korniya’” on the other hand, the command was to “destroy NKVD-men, secret collaborators, Jews, and Poles”²⁴.

Among the historians overly optimistic about the state of Ukrainian-Jewish relations is Anatolii Rusnachenko. In his interesting work titled “Narod zburenyi” he writes: “A [...] report from “Kindrativka” district [...] stated that there are very few Jews left, some of the survivors have weapons, and are hiding in the woods and hoping to establish communication with the OUN”²⁵. This detail, given right after data on the groups of Jews under the UPA’s protection in Volhynia, gives the impression that they saw a trusted partner in the OUN. However, the author does not state that information about the fate of Holocaust survivors is provided in the “Enemy Factors” section of one OUN document. Moreover, the text of the report – for July of 1943 – clearly reads: “Almost all Jews in our area have been executed. Some of the armed ones are hiding in the woods and it’s mainly these that want to establish contact with us”²⁶. The word “mainly” here changes the meaning behind the information concerning them “seeking” contact with the OUN. More importantly, Ruschenko does not mention in his book the contents of an August 1943 report from that same district, Kindrativka, located in the very same file. In the same section titled “Enemy Factors” we read about the fate of the Jews: “The Jews: almost entirely liquidated, they hide in small groups or individually in the forests and wait for the political situation to change. 7 Jewish men and 1 Jewish woman were killed in the area of Horyn by our hand”²⁷. To be fair, however, Anatolii Rusnachenko does mention elsewhere in his book the fact that in December 1943 the OUN killed two Jews in an area code-named “Bilhorod”.

It was only after the arrival of the Red Army that the OUN and UPA policy towards Jews changed. On September 5, 1944, “Bug” Military District command issued order No. 11/1944, which included the sentence: “Jews and other foreigners in our territories: we treat them as national minorities”²⁸. Another instruction clearly recommended: “Conduct no operations against Jews. The Jewish

23 Літопис УПА. Нова серія, в. 4, р. 126.

24 TsDAHOU, c. 1, d. 23, v. 928, p. 190.

25 Анатолій Русначенко, *Народ збурений. Національно-визвольний рух в Україні й національні рухи опору в Білорусії, Литві, Латвії, Естонії у 1940-1950-х роках*, Київ 2002, р. 135.

26 TsDAVOVU, c. 3836, d. 1, v. 64, p. 97.

27 *Ibidem*, p. 104.

28 *Ibidem*, c. 3833, d. 2,teczka 3, p. 5.

question is no longer a problem (very few of them are left). The above does not apply to those that act against us”²⁹.

The anti-Polish operations of the OUN-B and UPA in Eastern Galicia were nevertheless different from those carried out in Volhynia. They were often preceded by leaflets and only men were killed. In Galicia, the UPA's clear aim was to force the Poles to leave at any cost, not massacre them. Nevertheless, these operations were often so cruel that even some of the nationalists timidly suggested that further assaults be halted. One OUN organizer justified such a proposal as follows: “The resistance of the Polish self-defences has decreased to such an extent that Ukrainian measures give the impression of German actions against the Jews. [...] I believe that we have achieved everything we needed. Whether another 1,000 Poles leave Galicia or not is irrelevant”³⁰.

29 GARF, 9478, d. 1, 126, pp. 233-235.

30 Літопис УПА, v. 26, pp. 376-377.

Division SS “Galizien”

Facts and Myths

17.1 Organization of the Division

Throughout the war, a portion of Ukrainian circles, mainly in Galicia, saw in the Third Reich the only force that could ensure the emergence of an independent Ukraine. Among the politicians who periodically approached the Nazis with proposals to establish Ukrainian military units were Volodymyr Kubiyovych and Andriy Melnyk. For a long time, however, these proposals were met with silence.

At the beginning of 1943, mounting losses prompted the German leadership to correct its hitherto intransigent stance. On the initiative of Galicia's governor Otto Wächter, a decision was made to form a Galician Waffen SS division for regular combat on the eastern front. It was named the 14th SS-Volunteer Division “Galizien” (in Ukrainian: “Halychyna”). The creation of foreign SS units was not unusual at the time. French, Dutch, Latvian, Estonian, and Croatian units were all formed during the war under the banner of fighting communism. The division was intended to be Galician in make-up, not Ukrainian per se. For this reason, it did not tout the standard Ukrainian symbol, i.e. the tryzub (trident) on a blue-and-yellow background. Chosen as the division's symbol was a yellow Galician lion with three golden crowns on a blue field.

News of the division's formation announced on April 28, 1943, was received positively by Galician Ukrainians. Although the Germans had not made any political concessions, the creation of a Ukrainian SS was widely perceived by locals as the first step towards a state of their own. Not surprisingly, there were no problems recruiting volunteers. Eighty thousand people showed up at recruitment centres, of whom about fifty thousand were qualified for military service. Of these, however, only several thousand received training. Many people dropped out due to being shorter than the required 165 cm (with time, the minimum height for division recruits was lowered to 160 cm). The enthusiasm of some Galician Ukrainians was evidenced by cases where volunteers were given the banners of Ukrainian units from the First World War. The abbreviation SS was often interpreted as Sich Sharpshooters (the name of a Ukrainian military formation from 1914-1919, an equivalent of Piłsudski's Legions). Members of the “Nachtigall” battalion also fell into the ranks of the



Fig. 38 Heinrich Himmler in the company of German officers in front of the 14th Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS "Galizien", 1943.

division. Among the Ukrainian milieux, recruitment to the SS division was condemned by the OUN-B. The Banderites called for a recruitment boycott, though at the same time assigned a group of trusted people to the division.

The initiative of forming the division was supported by the Ukrainian Central Committee (UTsK), however, headed by Volodymyr Kubyovych. In April a Military Board consisting of two Germans and twelve Ukrainians was formed to handle the cultural, national, and material needs of the division's soldiers and their families. Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytskyi received the news of the Ukrainian unit's creation with understanding. Thanks to this, the division, as one of a select few SS units, was taken under ministerial care. Twelve Greek Catholic chaplains performed priestly services within it.

The flow of volunteers into the division did not slow until early 1944 following impressions dampened by Wehrmacht defeats. Only then did the recruiting committees resort to coercion. Many Ukrainians forcibly recruited at the time did not end up in SS "Halychyna" however but were assigned to other units like the SS "Viking" and "Hohenstaufen" divisions. Those who ended up in SS "Viking" took part in the heavy fighting around Budapest in December of 1944.

The "Halychyna" division was placed under German command. During training in the summer of 1943, it was commanded by SS Brigadeführer Walter Schimann, while from October 20, 1943, until the end of its existence – by SS Oberführer Fritz Freitag. There were also many Germans in lower levels of command, which caused dissatisfaction among the volunteers. This situation was assessed in one report of the Polish underground: "The moods in the division are anti-Polish, but the attitude towards the Germans is clearly hostile. The source of anti-German sentiment is political reasons in the form of 'disappointed hopes' and the Germans' bad treatment of Ukrainians in frontline areas [...]. Inside the division itself, there is dissatisfaction among the soldiers towards the Germans being superior in every role"¹.

17.2 Huta Pieniacka – A Galician Oradour-Sur-Glane

At the beginning of 1944, it was decided to deploy the soldiers of the division for counter-insurgency operations. In February a special combat group was formed under the command of SS Obersturmbannführer Friedrich Beyersdorf, which by the end of March was conducting raids on the Soviet partisans of General Pyotr Vershigora's division in the area of Cieszanów and Biłgoraj. It is at least likely that civilians were also murdered in these operations.

Two SS police regiments (the 4th and 5th), composed of division volunteers, were sent into action at the same time as Beyersdorf's group. The 5th Police Regiment commanded by SS Obersturmbannführer Franz Lechtaler was deployed along the Bug line. In March and April, it participated in operations against Polish and Soviet partisans, becoming brutally involved in Polish-Ukrainian battles taking place around Hrubieszów. For example, the incineration of about 100 Poles in a barn in Masłomęcz region may have been its doing. The soldiers of 5th Regiment established contact with the UPA in Lublin region, which resulted in numerous desertions (a total of one hundred and thirty-six recorded cases). In June of 1944, the 5th Regiment was disbanded, and its soldiers were incorporated into the division.

However, the greatest controversy surrounds the actions of 4th Regiment, commanded by SS Sturmbannführer Zygfryd Binz, tasked with protecting frontline facilities in Eastern Galicia. At the beginning of 1944, it participated

¹ *Raport polityczno-wojskowy z podróży odbytej w czasie od 1 VI do 18 VI 44*, in: *Ocalone archiwum Polski Podziemnej. Ziemia Wschodnie II RP w dokumentach ze zbioru Wojciecha Bukata*, Warsaw 1997, p. 49.

in various repressive operations, probably aiding the UPA in the massacres of Poles in Pidkamin and the village of Palikrowy for example. However, the greatest crime of the 4th SS Police Regiment was the pacification of Huta Pieniacka village – a Polish anti-UPA self-defence outpost also harbouring several Jews. A group of Soviet partisans was also stationed in Huta Pieniacka for some time. On February 23, 1944, a subunit from the 4th Regiment appeared in the vicinity of the village on reconnaissance. The Poles, thinking they were dealing with disguised Ukrainian soldiers, attacked the aggressors, killing two of them (the first soldiers of the SS “Galizien” division to be killed). The SS patrol was spared from a total pogrom by Yastrub’s UPA unit, which attacked the Poles from the flank.

The Germans organized a demonstrative funeral for the slain soldiers and carried out a punitive expedition, razing the village to the ground on February 28. Several hundred civilian inhabitants were murdered. Based on his own notes and stories of survivors, priest Jan Cieński described the course of the pacification as follows:

Early in the morning, the village was surrounded, the army went around the houses, rounding everyone up in the chapel without exception, whoever tried to escape or resist was shot on the spot. Some were taken to the cemetery, where they were executed, there were only a few of these. Most of the inhabitants were herded into barns and houses, in groups of a dozen or so, and set on fire. [...] By noon the operation was finished; meanwhile, the villagers’ property was looted: cattle, horses, pigs were taken by people from neighbouring Ukrainian villages, who arrived on wagons for the plunder².

A similar course of the pacification is described in the Weekly Report for March 5-11, 1944, of the Information and Press Department of the District Government Delegation in Lviv, written by Kazimierz Świrski:

German authorities sent a punitive expedition there, which consisted mainly of an SS “Halychyna” division unit [...] and a few Germans. It began by firing upon the village and throwing incendiary rockets [...]. Under this lighting, the Ukrainian savages rushed into houses and dragged out the inhabitants, taking them to the local church, where men, women, and children were sorted separately and led out in groups. Children were killed and thrown into the fire or burned alive, others were led to the cemetery and murdered there or en route, or herded into buildings and shot inside, with the buildings then set aflame. The whole village went up in smoke, only a few structures remained³.

2 F. Józef Wołczański, *Eksterminacja narodu polskiego ...*, p. 70.

3 *Kwestia ukraińska i eksterminacja ludności polskiej w Małopolsce Wschodniej ...*, p. 72.

A report by the RGO reads:

One witness spoke with a dying woman, wounded in the breast with a knife; she testified that a relative of theirs, **an SS officer from a nearby village** [emphasis – G.M.], despite her husband's incantations shot him, butchered their child, and pierced her with the knife, stating: "It's war now – no one is a relative any longer"⁴.

The cited documents show that immediately after the pacification, the Polish underground had no doubts as to who was responsible for it. What is more, according to a People's Commissariat for State Security (NKGB) investigation code-named "Zvery", members of the UPA from neighbouring villages also participated in the pacification alongside SS men from 4th Regiment. Yet, in 2009, publications appeared in Ukraine questioning the participation of Ukrainian volunteers in the massacre of the Poles. One supporter of this thesis is, for example, Andrii Bolanovskyi, who, based on an uncovered Polish underground document solely accusing the Germans of committing this crime, put forward the theory that accusations against the SS "Galizien" division were fabricated by the KGB. However, it is difficult to take his claim seriously, since – as we have seen – many materials exist (including those from the Polish underground) that unambiguously state that Ukrainian SS soldiers participated in the pacification.

Bolanovskyi's thesis is all the more surprising given that Ukrainian historians (Taras Hunczak for example) have not denied the presence of SS "Galizien" units in Huta Pieniacka, maintaining only that they did not participate in the murder of civilians. This was testified to by a statement made by one observer of the events, Mykhailo Khronoviat, who on March 7, 1944, reported on the course of the pacification at a meeting of the Military Board. "According to his report", we read in Hunchak's book, "the regiment took control of the village and after a short rest set off on its way. Once the division soldiers had left, a German subunit entered the settlement and 'destroyed the village completely'"⁵.

However, Hunchak's version of events also raises serious doubts. For example, none of the witness accounts state that any interchanges between pacification groups occurred during the operation. All witnesses unanimously claimed that the soldiers pacifying Huta Pieniacka communicated in Ukrainian (some, it turns out, they even knew personally). Additionally, police units were

4 *Antypolska akcja nacjonalistów ukraińskich w Małopolsce Wschodniej w świetle dokumentów Rady Głównej Opiekuńczej 1943-1944*, eds. Lucyna Kulińska, Adam Roliński, Kraków 2003, p. 344.

5 Taras Гунчак, *У мундирах ворога*, Kyiv 1993, pp. 75-76.

deployed by the Germans for similar operations a priori, so it would make no sense to give any “free passes” to the 4th Regiment.

Recently published minutes of the Military Board meeting show that doubts surrounding the veracity of Hunchak's thesis are fully justified – Khronoviat's full statement not only does not dismiss but rather confirms the participation of Ukrainian SS soldiers in the crime. Although Khronoviat did indeed confirm that after the 4th SS regiment left Huta Pieniacka “a separate German unit pacified it into oblivion”, he describes somewhat earlier the Ukrainian SS raid on the village as follows:

At 6 AM, we attacked [...]. The riflemen [...] fought well. They entered the village [...] after an hour of fighting and were in the village until 11 AM [...] The entire population fled to the church. They set fire to the church. Every hut was an ammunition depot – there was crackling, grenades exploded. Among the others, Jews were also hiding in the village. One Volksdeutscher was even found in the church, whom the German commander set free after questioning. One of our riflemen exclaimed: “We gave our blood and they let him go!” To this the rifleman got the response: “Don't be a fool, boy! Why did you even bother bringing a Volksdeutscher to the commander?”⁶.

It is worth emphasizing that – unlike in the case of the crimes in Volhynia however – the decision to raze Huta Pieniacka was made by the Germans, who often punished villages in areas where diversions were carried out in this manner. Thus, it represented a typical German pacification, though in this case carried out by Ukrainian SS soldiers. Given the fact that there were most likely between six and eight hundred victims, it should be considered one of the largest pacifications of its kind carried out by SS troops in the war. A few months later, on June 10, the SS division “Das Reich” massacred the town of Oradour-sur-Glane in retaliation for the kidnapping of a German officer by the French resistance. 642 Frenchmen were murdered there. To this day in France, the pacification is considered a flagship example of a war crime. A simple comparison of the number of victims shows that Huta Pieniacka was pacified on a similar scale at the least.

Soon after the destruction of Huta, one of 4th Regiment's battalions was sent to the front. A significant portion of its force was killed in battles near Zbarazh and Ternopil. At the beginning of June, the remaining fighters of 4th Regiment were incorporated into the division.

6 Роман Колісник, *Військова Управа та українська дивізія Галичина*, Київ 2009, pp. 213-214.

17.3 The Myth of the Warsaw Uprising's Suppression

While the participation of Galician volunteers in the described crimes in Galicia is a fact, the view that the Division SS "Galizien" participated in the suppression of the Warsaw Uprising is false. It is interesting that at the time, in 1944, Warsaw's inhabitants were convinced that Ukrainians were behind most of the crimes committed during the uprising. This opinion was widespread, as can be seen, for example, in texts published by the insurgent Warsaw press. For example, in issue 57 of "Biuletyn Informacyjny" – a main organ of the Home Army – dated August 20, 1944, we read: "the most savage instrument of enemy terror in Warsaw from the first day of the Uprising became ... the Ukrainians. It is impossible to enumerate the long list of mass murders, rapes, plunders, and inhumanities committed by them. It was mainly with their help that the Germans burned down entire districts [...] cruel revenge and punishment await them yet".

Meanwhile, research by Polish historians Ryszard Torzecki and Andrzej A. Zięba has shown that SS division "Halychyna" was not in Warsaw during the uprising. These historians unanimously claim that to be considered Ukrainian, it was enough to have a "way about you", a Cossack cap, a "slant-eyed" look, and use any language other than German. As a result, Warsaw residents soon began referring to all foreign units fighting on the German side as Ukrainian. This was especially true of Bronisław Kaminski's Russian National Liberation Army (RONA) brigade. Kaminski was the leader of the Russian National Socialist Party and his political plans aimed at creating a fascist state in Russia. His brigade committed numerous war crimes in Ochota district – mass rapes and murders, not to mention looting. At the former Radium Institute and so-called Zieleniak camp alone, RONA troops slaughtered about three hundred people between August 2 and September 2. The SS brigade of Oskar Dirlewanger, consisting of German criminals and responsible for massacres in Wola, was also supported by foreign troops. These were represented by two battalions of Turkmen from the Eastern Muslim SS regiment plus two battalions of Azerbaijanis. Additionally, subunits of Kalmyks and Cossacks (Donians, thus bound to Russian tradition) were brought to Warsaw. All the above were referred to by Varsovians as Ukrainians.

Existing sources demonstrate that a real fear of Ukrainians had already surfaced in the first weeks of August. A careful analysis of texts published in "Biuletyn Informacyjny" points to the conclusion that the arrival of Bronisław Kaminski's RONA brigade in Warsaw had the greatest impact on the belief in a Ukrainian presence. Much of the information in the periodical about Ukrainians concerned the RONA. Interestingly, its references to Ukrainians

became much less frequent with this brigade's departure to the Kampinos Forest area.

This does not mean, of course, that no Ukrainians took part in suppressing the uprising. Two Ukrainian police companies (eighty to one hundred and fifty men) were stationed in the area of Szucha Avenue and on Wawelska Street in the building of the University of Political Science. A group of ten NCOs and officers of Division SS "Galizien" trained in Poznań were attached to Reinefarth's unit, serving him as interpreters. The Germans also sent a portion (two companies) of the Ukrainian Self-Defense Legion (ULS) formed in 1943 in Volhynia against the Warsaw insurgents. These numbered two hundred and nineteen men. They fought in Powiśle in September 1944 under the command of Colonel Petro Diachenko against a desant of the First Polish Army. Later the Germans directed them to Kampinos Forest, where they took part in an operation against the Home Army at the end of September. In early 1945 the ULS was incorporated into SS "Galizien". Additionally, Ukrainians were permitted to serve in certain police battalions.

All these subunits were simply too small and, arriving mostly in September, too late to influence the opinions of Varsovians formed in early August. Let it be restated: Ukrainians were accused of crimes in Warsaw under the influence of the bloody "exploits" of the RONA brigade and other foreign troops indisputably responsible for crimes in Wola and Ochota.

17.4 On the Front

In June of 1944, the SS "Galizien" division was directed to the eastern front in Galicia and deployed in the Brody region. Several weeks later a Soviet offensive began, and the division found itself encircled. About seven thousand Ukrainians were killed or captured in the encirclement. Very few managed to join up with the UPA. About three thousand division soldiers escaped the trap, half of which were rear units (veterinary, technical services, etc.).

On August 7, 1944, Heinrich Himmler issued an instruction ordering the reconstitution of SS "Galizien". By the beginning of September, it again numbered about ten thousand men. At the turn of September/October, it was moved to Slovakia, where it suppressed an uprising that had broken out in that country. At the end of January 1945, the division was sent to Slovenia. There, it fought Tito's partisans. From April 1 on, it engaged in heavy battles against the Red Army in the area of Graz in Austria.

On March 17, 1945, the Germans agreed to the establishment of the Ukrainian National Committee (UNK), which represented Ukrainians vis-à-vis



Fig. 39 Shooting practice in the SS Division "Galizien", April 1944.

the Third Reich. At the same time, the establishment of the Ukrainian National Army (UNA) was announced, which was to include all Ukrainian units fighting on the side of Germany. General Pavlo Shandruk (a contracting officer in the Polish Army until the war's outbreak, decorated with the Order of Virtuti Militari for fighting in the campaign of 1939) became Commander-in-Chief of the UNA. Immediately after receiving the nomination, he rushed to the SS "Galizien" Division to transform it into the 1st Division of the UNA. In practice, this was a pure formality but with great propagandistic significance, as it removed the odium of belonging to the SS from the division's soldiers.

On May 7, 1945, upon hearing of Germany's ultimate defeat, the division left the front line, broke away from Soviet forces and capitulated before the British and Americans. Its soldiers were placed in camps in Italy. The change of the division's name, the fact that the volunteers serving in it were Polish citizens before the war, and lastly the intervention of the Vatican (and perhaps even General Anders) saved it from deportation to the USSR. In 1947 the former soldiers of Division SS "Halychyna" were allowed to leave for Canada and England, where they quickly integrated into the Ukrainian emigree milieu.

Polish-Ukrainian Conflict in the Lublin Land (1943-1944)

18.1 SS Brigadeführer Odilo Globočnik and his Policies in Lublin District

Due to its peripheral location and favourable transport connections, Lublin region was an ideal place for the implementation of the “final solution”. SS chief Heinrich Himmler entrusted the task to loyal, Carinthian-born SS Brigadeführer Odilo Globočnik. This fanatic Nazi, nicknamed “Globe” by his colleagues, was appointed SS and police commander of the Lublin district in 1939.

Globočnik’s ambition from the beginning of his tenure was to play as large a role as possible in Germany’s plans to “put the world in order”. He therefore enthusiastically set about his new duties, establishing the death camps at Bełżec and Sobibór, as well as the concentration camp at Majdanek. On his initiative, special auxiliary units of SS-Wachmannschaften, often called the Trawnikiänner (“The men of Trawniki”) after the village of Trawniki where they were trained, were created to carry out the Holocaust. This formation initially consisted of former Red Army prisoners of war, after its second enlistment also of Ukrainians from Lublin region. Although Ukrainians seem to have made up the majority of its personnel, representatives of other nations also served in the unit. SS men from Trawniki (like Ivan Demianiuk, whose trial began in November 2009 in Germany) later became part of the crews of concentration and extermination camps, including Treblinka, Sobibor, Auschwitz, and Mauthausen, and also took part in suppressing the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. It is worth noting that all “Ukrainian SS men” often mentioned in various works on the Holocaust (as well as the black-clad guards at Płaszów concentration camp from the famous film “Schindler’s List”) belonged precisely to the Trawnikiänner formation.

On March 17, 1942, Operation Reinhardt, i.e. the mass extermination of Jews in the General Government (GG), began in Lublin. Most were murdered inside gas chambers at Treblinka, Sobibor, and Bełżec, some were shot. On the cusp of 1942, Globočnik organized a bloodbath in Lublin region, going down in history as one of the greatest Nazi criminals. About two million Jews were murdered in the areas under his control, the same happening earlier to several



Fig. 40
Odilo Globočnik, SS and police
commander in Lublin District.

hundred thousand Soviet POWs starved to death in POW camps at Dęblin, Chełm, Zamość, and others. A side effect of these extermination operations was the formation of various partisan groups. In Podlachia, for example, a partisan group composed of escaped Soviet POWs, supported by local communists, was formed. In March 1942 they were joined by Jews seeking refuge from the Holocaust. Through April and May, to destroy this nascent partisan movement, the Germans carried out a series of pacification operations, mercilessly slaughtering discovered POWs and Jews, as well as Ukrainian and Polish peasants suspected of harbouring them.

For Globočnik, however, this was only the beginning of the implementation of Nazi plans. In 1941, during a visit by Himmler to the Lublin region, he presented him with a vision of rapid Germanisation of the Zamość land. Himmler accepted the plan and granted Globočnik the appropriate powers. Resettlement was to become part of the so-called General Plan East (Generalplan Ost), which aimed at creating a German settlement ring in the East within a few decades and included the Germanization of the entire General Government. Globočnik's plan envisaged displacing Poles from the Zamość district and settling in their place Volksdeutsche from Bosnia, Romania, Slovenia, and other countries.

A so-called Ukraineaktion was also envisaged as part of this operation. As per its aims, it was decided to also partially remove Poles from Hrubieszów and

Biłgoraj districts and replace them with Ukrainians previously displaced from Zamość district. In this way, a "protective belt around the German resettlement zone" would be created, shielding Germans from Polish partisan strikes out of the Biłgoraj forests. The Nazis predicted correctly, as it turned out, that Polish rage would focus first on the resettled Ukrainians.

The displaced Polish population was taken to concentration camps or for labour in Germany and other districts of the General Government. Receipts were to be issued for the farms and possessions taken, but these did not guarantee compensation. As Globočnik put it, "It will be decided in the future whether their property will ever be compensated at all in Brazil or the Far East"¹. The Germans had already carried out trial evictions of several villages in the fall of 1941, but it was not until November 27, 1942, that the main German displacement action began, which by the end of December covered sixty villages inhabited by thirty-four thousand people. On January 15, 1943, however, the "Ukraineaktion" began. Villages in Hrubieszów district were the first to be targeted. Out of 14 739 Poles, only 5578 were captured; the rest managed to escape the manhunt and partly joined up with the partisans. However, by February the displacement action began pittering out, with the last two villages being displaced on March 2. The whole action touched one hundred and sixteen villages in total.

The Polish population resisted spontaneously, additionally encouraged by memories of the fate of the Jews. There was a widespread conviction that only death awaited the displaced, so regardless of the time of year inhabitants attempted to hide from the displacements, destroyed their belongings, and slaughtered the herds of cattle that would otherwise be repossessed by the Germans. Many converted to Orthodoxy and tried obtaining Ukrainian identity papers. Units of the Home Army and Peasant Battalions (BCh) stood up in defence of the population, burning already-occupied villages and mercilessly slaughtering German colonists. Several partisan battles against German military police took place (including ones near Wojda and Zaboreczne). The resistance grew exponentially – in February of 1943 the Germans recorded 1600 attacks in the Lublin district (by partisans as well as by criminal gangs), in March – 2306, and in April – 2320. Nevertheless, the Home Army tried to limit its operations to a necessary minimum, fearing they would morph into an uprising that could be easily suppressed by the Germans.

The displacement operation caused friction among the GG authorities. The civil authorities, headed by Governor Hans Frank, were strongly opposed to it. Reich Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels also criticized it. Despite

1 Cit. per: Berndt Rieger, *Odilo Globocnik. Twórca nazistowskich obozów śmierci*, Zakrzewo 2009, p. 197.

this, Globočnik launched the significant Operation Wehrwolf on the night of June 23, 1943, which aimed at further displacements and the destruction of partisan units. 173 villages were displaced. Out of the sixty thousand inhabitants of these villages, thirty-six thousand people were captured, some of whom were sent to the camp at Majdanek. Lublin District Governor Richard Wendler wrote: "Globočnik has conducted the campaign in a completely different manner and to a much greater extent than was agreed upon. As a result, we have one great pigsty on our hands, with masses of people overflowing the area in a disorderly and aimless fashion"².

The displacement operation not only failed to liquidate but even strengthened the Polish resistance movement. In response to the German operations, General Bór-Komorowski ordered retaliatory actions consisting of the "liquidation of units that distinguished themselves with savagery and zeal in murdering, oppressing, and hunting the Polish population during the pacification" and striking "at German villages and settlements whose inhabitants were directly or indirectly involved in the occupant's crimes. I have ordered to burn such villages and eliminate their population to the last"³. Per the received orders, German colonies were attacked – among them, for example, Siedliska, where, according to Polish sources, sixty Germans who had been resettled were killed.

Defeat at the Battle of Kursk and the Eastern Front's collapse finally convinced the Nazis that Globočnik's policies were pure adventurism, and he thus resigned from his post on August 20, 1943 (he was transferred to Trieste, committing suicide after the Third Reich's defeat). His departure was greeted with relief by the Germans themselves. Richard Wendler expressed this in a letter to Himmler: "Dear Heinrich! I simply cannot express [...] how relieved I am to hear that you have decided to move him elsewhere"⁴.

18.2 The German Provocation Succeeds

The Lublin land was a region where the majority of the population was Polish. Orthodox followers were in a distinct minority here, putting them in a completely different situation than that of Ukrainians in Volhynia. According to the 1931 census, there were 208,400 Orthodox Christians in the Lublin region.

In accordance with Hans Frank's stipulations, the Germans tried keeping the Ukrainians in Lublin district "somewhat satisfied", thus returning certain

² *Ibidem*.

³ *Armia Krajowa w dokumentach*, v. 3, Wrocław–Warsaw–Kraków 1990, pp. 91-92.

⁴ Cit. per: Berndt Rieger, *Odilo Globocnik ...*, p. 200.

religious buildings to them, like the cathedral in Chełm. Under the aegis of the Ukrainian Central Committee (UTsK), Ukrainian cooperatives and education developed, with a middle school in Chełm and a teacher seminary in Hrubieszów being opened. Taking advantage of the favourable German policy, Ukrainians took up many positions in the local administration (as mayors, village leaders). UTsK organizers welcomed the creation of Ukrainian Auxiliary Police stations. Several dozens of these were opened around the Lublin district, with the officers quickly gaining a bad reputation among the Polish population. To consolidate Ukrainian gains, UTsK chairman Volodymyr Kubyovych proposed that territory be set aside within the GG where only Ukrainians were allowed to live, with Poles being expelled from it. This was the fate envisaged for the Polish population in eastern Lublin region, among others.

The outbreak of German-Soviet hostilities weakened the development of Ukrainian social life in the Lublin land. With the Wehrmacht's occupation of Ukraine, most of the newcomers from Galicia, who had previously actively pursued a policy of Ukrainization, left for the east. German pacifications carried out in response to partisan activity in 1942 also involved the Ukrainian population. These repressions took the Ukrainians by surprise, but their hopes in the Third Reich's policies were so high that they were widely explained away as Polish provocations.



Fig. 41 Ukrainian peasants' wooden homesteads in one of the villages near Hrubieszów/Hrubeshiv, October 1940.

The UTsK received the resettlement beginning in late 1942 rather positively. Kubyovych, who presented GG authorities with successive memoranda proposing resettlement and the creation of separate, purely Ukrainian cantons in the GG, probably naively believed that the resettlement of the Zamość land was the first step in this direction. In a meeting with Hans Frank in August 1943, he offered a positive assessment of the Ukraineaktion. His only reservations concerned the execution of Operation Wehrwolf. The Germans had displaced several hundred Ukrainian families during the operation, but because they had halted the action before completion, they had not managed to remove Poles from farms to which these families were to be relocated. As a result, the Ukrainians were left without a roof over their heads. Kubyovych thus demanded that the action be completed, asking also that local Ukrainian police be strengthened. Frank, who at the beginning of the meeting gave Kubyovych his signed photograph, upon hearing the UTsK chairman's demands assured they would be met; fortunately for the Polish families, this turned out to be an empty promise.



Fig. 42 Ukrainian women in folk dress on a street in Hrubieszów, August 1940.

The Ukrainians, those who were forced to occupy Polish farms, reacted differently to the UTsK organizers. They also felt aggrieved, as they had been forced to leave their homes overnight. In the eyes of the Polish displaced, however,

resettled Ukrainians were property looters and German collaborators. This impression was reinforced by the actions of the Ukrainian Auxiliary Police, who actively participated in German repressions. In this situation, it is not surprising that the German provocation was a complete success. Poles organizing self-defence posts would indeed direct part of their attacks against the Ukrainian population.

Beginning in January 1943, Polish partisan units began "eliminating" Ukrainian village heads, agronomists, and shop stewards of the Ukrainian Relief Committee (UDK). In Hrubieszów district, for example, Hrubieszów UDK chairman Jakiv Strutynskyi and Colonel Jakiv Halchevskyi, who had organized the self-defence for the region, were killed. Home Army and BCh groups attacked Ukrainian Auxiliary Police outposts; in March 1943, they eliminated posts in Poturzyn and Modryń. Ukrainians settled in Biłgoraj district found themselves in the most difficult situation. Poles constantly attacked them and took their belongings, i.e. horses and clothes. This was often accompanied by beatings and occasionally even murders. All this was done to force them off the occupied farmsteads.

Ukrainian police also acted ruthlessly. In February 1943 policemen murdered several people in Skomorochy. On February 12 they killed Zygmunt Bondarewicz, commander of the Sahryń-Turkowice Home Army company, while on March 18 Home Army officer Antoni Pelc was killed in Wronowice. From the start of 1943, Lublin region became engulfed in a guerilla war between the Polish underground and Ukrainian police, in which both sides inflicted heavy blows on each other, convinced completely of the enemy's guilt.

The Polish underground first applied the principle of collective responsibility in May 1943. Fifty-nine Ukrainian farmsteads in Mołożów and eighty in Strzelce were razed. According to various data, between fifty and seventy civilians were killed. That same month, the village of Tuchanie was also torched. It is possible that, at least in the case of Strzelce, this amounted to retaliation for the death of Franciszek "Góral" Krakiewicz, a Home Army unit commander, in a skirmish with police. In another clash, the Ukrainians captured the office of the AK District HQ, which enabled the Germans to arrest about sixty conspirators.

The termination of the German displacement operation could have led to a quieting of anti-Ukrainian activity in the Lublin region, but this was prevented by the UPA's massacres in Volhynia. As a result of the July killings, thousands of refugees from beyond the Bug River flooded into the Lublin land. They brought with them tidings of UPA atrocities that shook the Polish population. Emotioned by this news, the Poles intensified their actions against Ukrainians in the autumn of 1943. Ukrainian police stations in Mieniany, Mołodiatycze,

Grabowiec, Łukowa, and others were destroyed. On September 2, the village head of Grabowiec and four farmers in Bronisławice were killed. On September 8, the Senyshyns (Mykhailo and Maria) and a teacher were killed in Mircze. On September 11, in the village of Miękkie, UDK shop steward Ivan Shavarskyi was killed. On October 1 nine Ukrainians were killed and eight wounded (according to other sources there were eleven victims) in the village of Pasięka. Twenty-eight farmsteads were also razed. On October 22, 1943, the BCh unit of Stanisław "Ryś" Basaj killed twenty-six people and burned one hundred and ninety homesteads in Mircze. On October 27, 1943, fourteen Ukrainians were killed in Mołodiatycze. On December 18, an attack on Peresólowice led to the death of eighteen Ukrainians (mostly men). On December 24, sixteen more lost their lives in Modryń.

The wave of murders of Ukrainians covered the whole GG. Under the banner of retaliation for Volhynia, Home Army units also carried out many executions of Ukrainian activists in the Kraków, Warsaw, and Radom districts. Sometimes poison was used. According to Henryk Witkowski, between April and July the Warsaw District Home Army Kedyw poisoned six hundred and fifteen "Ukrainians and Belarusians in German service" as part of a bacteriological-toxicological operation⁵.

It must be noted, however, that Ukrainian police also committed crimes in tandem. On November 3, thirteen Poles were killed in Wasylów Wielki, and at least twenty-five in Stara Wieś on the night of December 15. On December 19, 1943, in Potok Górny in Biłgoraj district, policemen burned part of the village and killed twenty-one people (probably in retaliation for the deaths of four Ukrainians). There were stark demands that the Germans not only prosecute perpetrators of murders of Ukrainians (which would be understandable) but also shoot any hostages. When the Poles killed Dmytro Nimolovych's father in Grabówka (Krosno district) on the night of September 9 (a UDK Sanok report stated: "he reconverted many former Polish apostates back to the Greek rite"), local Ukrainian activists demanded that the UTsK calls upon German authorities on the matter, "to hold someone accountable, to possibly apply the officially-announced collective responsibility against the Poles"⁶. The Germans, in response to attacks on Ukrainians, sometimes did indeed execute Poles arrested at random. On January 6, 1944, posters were put up in the Lublin land stating that thirty-six people had been publicly executed for the aforementioned attacks on Peresólowice and Modryń.

5 Henryk Witkowski, *"Kedyw" Okręgu Warszawskiego Armii Krajowej w latach 1943-1944*, Warsaw 1984, p. 419.

6 TsDAVOVU, c. 3959, d. 1, v. 143, p. 6.

18.3 Was the Volhynian Massacre Provoked by Killings of Ukrainians in Lublin Region?

In the ongoing discussion in Ukraine surrounding the UPA's anti-Polish operations, it is often emphasized that these came in retaliation for earlier Polish actions in the Lublin land. In this context, the newspaper "Volhynia" cited the example of the pacification of the Ukrainian village of Peresiołowice during a debate that took place in Ukraine on this subject in 2003. However, this amounted to disinformation. As we have seen, the attack on Peresiołowice was indeed carried out by the Polish underground, but since it took place on December 18, 1943, it obviously could not have had any influence on the UPA's July actions in Volhynia. The newspaper's editors would probably have come to the same conclusion, had they not moved the date of the attack to December ... 1942.

The example I've provided shows how important chronological precision is in establishing cause-and-effect sequences in the Polish-Ukrainian debate. This applies in particular to the common Ukrainian conviction that the UPA's actions in Volhynia were a consequence of the Polish underground's anti-Ukrainian activities in the Lublin region. Unfortunately, no Ukrainian historian has yet even attempted to substantiate this hypothesis, limiting themselves instead to general statements about the thousands of Ukrainian dead and Polish crimes. What's more, all cited examples of killings come from the years 1943-1944 (leaving aside cases of confusion and misinformation in the form of date alterations, as was done with the Peresiołowice operation). The thesis of Ukrainian researchers would thus be true only if mass killings had taken place in the Lublin region before the UPA launched its anti-Polish campaign in Volhynia, i.e. before the attack on Parośla in February 1943. Let us also state from the outset that there is absolutely nothing indicating there were mass crimes against Ukrainians at this time. As we have seen, such assaults were not recorded in the Lublin region until May 1943. Nor was their aim to "cleanse" the Lublin region of Ukrainians, but rather to oppose the German resettlement operation.

Prior, only isolated cases of Ukrainians' killings took place in the Lublin land. According to available data, in 1942 seven Ukrainians died at the hands of the Polish underground in Hrubieszów district (UTsK shop stewards), four in Biłgoraj district (a policeman, mayor, and two teachers), and one in Biała Podlaska district. The majority of victims, as many as nineteen, perished in Lublin district. Ukrainian police casualties in the whole General Government at that time amounted to seventeen dead and eleven wounded. It is difficult to view this as sufficient justification for the mass anti-Polish operations in

Volhynia. All the more so given the number of Poles killed that year in similar individual OUN executions in Volhynia or by Ukrainian police in Lublin district was probably at least comparable. All this without even mentioning the hundreds of Poles killed by the OUN in diversionary operations in the summer of 1941, after the outbreak of the German-Soviet war.

It is worth noting that the information contained in a June-July 1942 OUN bulletin, which mentions the suffering of Ukrainians in the Lublin region as a result of Polish activity, is also mistaken. It is clear from the description that it refers to pacifications in the spring of 1942, during which the Germans had tried to destroy communist partisan groups and hidden Jews, in the process committing executions in some villages. In its bulletin, the OUN placed the responsibility for the pacification not on German authorities, but rather ... on the Poles, who had allegedly caused them. In reality, however, the repressions affected not only Ukrainians but Poles as well.

Volodymyr Kubyovych did not mention any mass killings committed by Poles in a brief from February 1943, describing the process of the insurgency's development in the Lublin land:

Initially, the bands consisted of Soviet refugees and POWs [...]. With time, Jews and Poles who were, for various reasons, avoiding the German police also joined. Due to the displacement operation, especially in Zamość district, the bands increased by hundreds or even thousands of Poles. [...] These bands fight not only against the German authorities but also – and to a serious degree – against the Ukrainian population, on whom they exact revenge for their pro-German attitude⁷.

As we see, Kubyovych clearly linked the spurring of Polish partisan activities with the displacement of the Poles. He also did not see in the Polish operations any intention of ethnic cleansing. Interestingly, in this brief he was complaining to German authorities about their use of collective responsibility in response to actions of the Polish underground, and against Ukrainians rather than Poles at that. He wrote:

The result is that collective responsibility, which aims at annihilating anti-German elements, destroys or weakens German-friendly elements and creates among them a mood of discontent and bitterness. In Lublin district, **about 400** [emphasis – G.M.] such Ukrainians lost their lives in this way⁸.

⁷ *Polacy i Ukraińcy ...*, p. 1251.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 1253.

These words clearly indicate that at the beginning of 1943, the Germans inflicted greater losses on the Ukrainian population of the Lublin region than the Polish underground! This situation was only to change in the coming months.

According to Ukrainian sources, a total of about six hundred Ukrainians died at Polish hands in the Lublin region between 1942 and 1943. Considering that at least forty thousand Poles were killed at the same time in Volhynia, it's hard to see these numbers as comparable. Especially since the majority of the Ukrainians mentioned fell victim to the events in Volhynia in the second half of 1943.



Fig. 43 A Ukrainian music ensemble in the village of Sielec/Selets, Chełm District, the 1930s.

Ukrainians were undoubtedly the weaker side in the Lublin land and were affected by the activities of the Polish underground. However, as is known from Ukrainian documents, they were well aware of the reason behind the intensification of anti-Ukrainian assaults in the second half of 1943. A report of the organizational board of the Hrubieszów UDK for September of that year reads:

In the month of September, Polish terrorist actions in the Hrubeshiv area intensified. The reasons: a) **retaliation for Volhynia** [emphasis – G.M.]; b) the return of Poles who had been at Majdanek in Lublin⁹.

In September 1943, Kubyovych himself explained the deterioration of Polish-Ukrainian relations in the Lublin region by the appearance of refugees from Volhynia in Chełm. As a result, he demanded the Germans remove all Volhynian refugees from the city. The Banderites themselves saw the situation similarly. When, at the beginning of 1944, Polish-Ukrainian relations in the Lublin land entered their critical phase, OUN reports assessed the genesis of these events as follows: “The direct cause of this seems to be the retaliatory operations against the Polish element in Galicia and the same actions carried out by the Poles here”¹⁰.

Where does this common misconception about the primacy of the martyrology of the Ukrainians in the Lublin region come from? In the Polish literature on this subject, it is most often, if not almost always, blamed on the victory of nationalist propaganda. There is some truth in this, as the OUN-B never openly spoke of its plans to carry out ethnic cleansing but was always willing to position itself as the defender of the Ukrainian population. It began presenting its anti-Polish operations as retaliation for the Lublin land as early as 1944. The most famous example here is the brochure “Kudy priamuyut Poliaky?” written by Myroslav Prokop. It had a clear propagandistic character, and therefore treating it as an unbiased source, as is sometimes done, should be considered a serious methodological error.

Nevertheless, this does not explain why in 1944 all Ukrainian public opinion in Galicia was deeply convinced of the primacy of the suffering of Ukrainians in the Lublin land. This was the opinion of Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytskyi (which he expressed in his correspondence with Roman Catholic Archbishop Bolesław Twardowski), and communist writer Jaroslav Halan (murdered by the OUN in 1949). Halan described the genesis of the Polish-Ukrainian conflict in the text “Słowo do braci Polaków” [A word to our Polish brothers]:

It began with the murder of the Ukrainian population near Hrubieszów and ended with [...] the destruction of entire Polish villages in Volhynia and Galicia. [...] Ukrainian peasants in the Chełm region were killed by those who before September 1939 wore the reactionary swords of Bolesław Chrobry on their chests and ordinary butcher's knives in their bootlegs. [...] Polish peasants

9 TsDAVOVU, c. 3959, d. 2, v. 143, p. 12.

10 *Ibidem*, c. 3833, d. 1, v. 153, p. 2, Report from Przemyśl district for 29 February-1 April 1944.

near Lutsk and Ternopil were slaughtered by the same people who before September 1939 wore the Petliurite tryzub on their chests and German revolvers in their pockets¹¹.

In an attempt to explain this phenomenon, one must look at the circulation of information at the time. News of the fate of Ukrainians in the Lublin region, which highlighted their tragedy and at the same time passed over in silence the Poles' situation in that region, reached Eastern Galicia more or less simultaneously with the news of massacres in Volhynia. Given that Ukrainians were more concerned about the fate of their compatriots around Chełm and for a long time had had doubts about the identity of the perpetrators of the Volhynian murders, the conviction that the two phenomena were at least equivalent easily formed among them. In discussions undoubtedly held among groups of friends, a simple explanation of the situation naturally arose: "they kill us in the Chełm land, we kill them in Volhynia".

One could say that the Ukrainians succumbed to collective delusion. To those to whom this seems impossible (or who consider such a hypothesis an attempt at relativizing Polish wrongdoings towards the Ukrainians), it is worth recalling that a similar delusion existed in Warsaw during the uprising. The inhabitants of the capital were convinced in 1944 that the SS "Galizien" division had suppressed the uprising, ascribing to it the worst crimes. Similarly, Ukrainian public opinion in Galicia concluded that the tragedy of the Ukrainians in the Lublin region was at least equal to the Volhynian massacres and chronologically even preceded them. Thus, Banderite propaganda did not so much shape a particular telling of events as it conformed to existing societal beliefs.

In conclusion, the killings of Ukrainians in the Lublin region could not have had and did not have any impact on the anti-Polish operation in Volhynia. The Banderites committed mass killings of Poles to carry out their project of ethnically cleansing the region. However, they skillfully concealed their aims, which led to a situation in which Ukrainians, already during the war, came to believe the version giving primacy to the suffering of the Ukrainian minority in the Lublin land.

11 Ярослав Галан, *Твори*, v. 3, Kyiv 1978, p. 377. First published in Polish in "Czerwony Sztandar" on 23 December 1944, and on 5 January 1945 in Ukrainian in "Radiańska Ukraina".

18.4 Polish-Ukrainian Battles in 1944

The actions carried out by the Polish underground between 1942 and 1943 may of course raise ethical concerns, but they still fit within the logic of ruthless struggle for biological survival brought on by the German displacement operation. Unfortunately, however, in 1944 the underground decided to go a step further and apply the principle of collective responsibility to Ukrainians on a scale never before seen in Polish operations.

In 1943, Ukrainians living in the Lublin region could count on protection only from the Germans and Ukrainian police. Admittedly, the OUN in the Chełm land carried out a particularly intensive propaganda campaign in 1939-1941, but after the outbreak of the German-Soviet war many nationalist organizers left for "Greater Ukraine", weakening the organization. Nevertheless, a group of Ukrainian youth underwent various propaganda and military training and formed the backbone of the organizational network. In September 1943, leaflets appeared in the Lublin region calling on Poles to leave the area. These were like gasoline to a flame.

At the beginning of 1944, the Banderites created two SB militias in the Chełm area, expanded the OUN network, and organized village self-defence in many localities. Already by January, the newly created militias began "reprisal actions", which were to mostly affect the local landowners. It was probably these militias that carried out several attacks on landowners' estates in the region in late 1943 and early 1944. In one such attack, at the Radostów estate in Hrubieszów district, Kazimierz and Odetta Dobiecki were killed. In another, on February 9, in a raid on the Białowody estate, Grotthuss was murdered alongside Ewa Jankowska, née Jabłońska, and her husband. On February 28 Katarzyna and Helena Cieśla were shot at the Modryniec estate, followed by the razing of the Rulikówka colony, with several people killed in the process.

These and other Ukrainian attacks caused a violent reaction of the Polish underground. In response, it decided to treat local Ukrainians as it had treated German colonists. The formal legitimization of these actions was probably based on General Bór's order to "eliminate to the last" the colonists of settlements that had "directly or indirectly" participated in war crimes. It was acknowledged, most likely tacitly, that this applied not only to Germans but also Ukrainians.

The "anti-Ukrainian offensive" began on March 10, 1944, with a concentrated attack by Hrubieszów and Tomaszów Home Army units, supported by Stanisław "Ryś" Basaj's BCh battalion. In the first wave, several Ukrainian villages were burned down (among others Sahryń, Łasków, Szychowice) and the civilian population was murdered. In Sahryń, in the face of Polish superiority,

the local self-defence fled the battlefield, and the resistance of policemen defending from a barricaded station also broke quite quickly. The units then started pulling civilians out from various hiding spots. One of the several Polish families living in Sahryń almost too fell victim to the executions; the partisans deliberated a long time whether to believe their identity papers, loudly asking questions interwoven with curses: "What kind of Poles are you if the Ukrainians haven't killed you yet?" Eventually, however, they were let go. The fate of the Ukrainian population in Sahryń was described in this way by Anastazja Szufel, a resident of the village, who was pulled out of a shelter with her family:

They shot my father, who died soon after, then my mother. After my mom, they killed my husband's cousin, while our neighbour managed to escape. Then they approached my daughter [...] she took a bullet in the neck [...] they started shooting at me. I was hit three times ... My daughter died quickly. The band thought I was done for and approached my grandmother ... They killed her [...] set the hut on fire and left¹².



Fig. 44 A Home Army unit with the burning village of Sahryń/Sahryn in the background, March 9, 1944.

In the following days, Polish units struck, among others, Bereść, Modryń, Modrynec, and Maślomęcz. In total, over a few weeks in March, several dozen Ukrainian villages were burned, killing probably about one and a half thousand Ukrainians. Polish losses amounted to one or two dead and two or three

12 Cit. per: *Polacy i Ukraińcy ...*

wounded, the only partisan killed in the operation at Sahryń being shot by his commander for offences committed before the anti-Ukrainian offensive began.

In the following days, several UPA units from Volhynia and Eastern Galicia entered Lublin region. One unit was commanded by Miroslav “Orest” Onyshkevych, who took command of the UPA in Poland in 1945. It is often written that their primary goal was protecting the population. Most likely, however, the OUN-B and UPA, privy to the stipulations of the popular uprising, wanted to create a strong partisan grouping along the route of a possible Polish attack towards Lviv. The UPA sotnias arriving in the Lublin land were tasked with destroying Polish partisans, but also “liquidating or expelling beyond the borders of the Chełm land the entire Polish population”¹³. On March 15, 1944, a local OUN militia consisting of former policemen stormed the narrow-gauge railroad station in Gozdów, killing thirty-three people – anyone who had Polish nationality stated in their identity papers.

At the beginning of April, the Ukrainians launched larger offensive operations. On April 5 UPA units attacked Podlodów, Żerniki, and Rokitno. The Poles stopped the Ukrainian attack with difficulty, though UPA men captured Żerniki, nonetheless. Additionally, taking advantage of the commotion, they killed about 100 civilians in the village of Łubcze. During Easter, on the night of April 9, UPA sotnias launched a general assault on Polish positions in the Posadowo area. Fierce fighting ensued, taking Home Army units by surprise. After an all-day battle, the Ukrainians captured the village, losing six partisans. Under pressure from the UPA, Polish units withdrew to the Huczwa River line. With their departure the civilian population left as well, heading westwards. One can sense the joy in a Ukrainian document describing the events: “News of our victory over the Poles immediately spread over almost the entire Kholm region. The population exulted. This was the first armed victory on this land since the times of Bohdan Khmelnytskyi”¹⁴.

The following days saw more Polish-Ukrainian clashes, but also the killing of civilians. On April 17 a UPA unit killed fifteen “Polish bandits” in Rzeczeki, while the “Prolom” sotnia killed thirty in Zabuże. On April 19 Marian “Yahoda” Lukashevych’s sotnia destroyed Steniatyn without a fight. On April 27 in the area of Ulicko-Seredkevych village, UPA men killed fifty-five men and five women. May saw heavy fighting between the Home Army and UPA over Nabroź, which ended in a Ukrainian triumph.

As a result of these events, a regular Polish-Ukrainian front stretching over 100 kilometres with a no man’s land of several kilometres was formed, manned

13 Роман Шухевич у документах..., p. 542.

14 Polacy i Ukraińcy ..., p. 1401.

by Home Army and BCh units on one side and UPA units on the other. On the Ukrainian side, the so-called UPA Kholm Front was formed, commanded by Stepan "Spets" Novytskyi. Representatives of Chełm's community, under the leadership of the Orthodox Metropolitan Ilarion (Professor Ivan Ohienko), created the Kholm Council, which was to represent the Ukrainians of Lublin region. It also served as the UPA's political base in the region.

On June 2, 1944, Polish partisan units attempted a counteroffensive, but after day-long battles at Rzeczyca, Ulhówek, and others, were forced to retreat behind the Huczwa River. Seventy-one Home Army soldiers were killed and about one hundred wounded. Eventually, the "Polish-Ukrainian front" stabilized on the line: Uhnów-Żerniki-Steniatyn-Nabród, then further along the Huczwa River to Koniuchy, then through the village of Bereść all the way to Grabowiec. This state of affairs lasted in the area until the arrival of the Red Army.

A bit further south, in Lubaczów district, Ivan "Zalizniak" Shpontak formed a UPA sotnia out of deserters from the auxiliary police in early April. On April 19 Zalizniak's unit razed Rudka, murdering fifty-eight Poles there. On April 25 the same sotnia destroyed Wólka Krowicka, while on May 4, together with district militias, Cieszanów, where several people died (the rest of the population was evacuated by the Home Army). On May 13 Zalizniak destroyed the Frajweld colony, where he killed nine "Polish colonists".

The UPA's activities prompted the Home Army to organize an anti-Ukrainian defence, setting the Bełżec-Lubaczów road as the line of demarcation. The Polish population was obliged to move to the western side of this road, the Ukrainian population to the east of it. As an "incentive" for the Ukrainians to leave, ten prominent people from Bełżec were executed, the rest being given a twenty-four-hour ultimatum. A guerilla war continued in the area over the following weeks. Assaults on Polish positions and murders of Polish civilians were answered with bloody counterattacks. In one report we read: "An armed Polish group carried out retaliatory operations against impudent Ukrainians in Pasieki Zubrzyckie. During the retaliation, eighteen Ukrainians and five Poles were shot dead. The Poles were in Ukrainian houses at the time and, thinking it was a Ukrainian attack, identified themselves as Ukrainians"¹⁵. This information demonstrates that many Poles and Ukrainians remained good neighbours without succumbing to the overwhelming wave of hatred. This was not the only example of Poles and Ukrainians living side by side and agreeing to support each other. If the UPA appeared in a village, Ukrainians were to insist that all persons were of Ukrainian nationality. In the event of the arrival of Home

15 *Raport z Ziemi Wschodnich* no 45, p. 4.

Army units, the Poles would assume the same role. The problem was recognizing which partisan group they were dealing with.

As a result of Polish-Ukrainian battles, a portion of the territory of the Hrubieszów and Tomaszów Lubelski districts lay destroyed and depopulated. This is how Home Army officer Stanisław Książek described his journey through these lands:

Emptiness [...] the trees singed, the houses destroyed, shattered [...]. This was scorched earth, whole kilometres of it [...]. Houses, only the chimneys sticking out, and wild cats and dogs¹⁶.

The strength of the Polish underground meant Ukrainian civilians suffered numerous losses in the Lublin land, unlike in Volhynia and Eastern Galicia. Among Ukrainian victims were Orthodox priests. Seven of them were later recognized as martyrs for their faith and canonized in Chełm in June 2003.

¹⁶ Cit. per: Mariusz Zajączkowski, *Drogi do porozumienia między polskim i ukraińskim podziemiem niepodległościowym w latach 1945-1947*, in: *Od zniewolenia do wolności. Studia historyczne*, ed. Adam F. Baran, Warsaw-Białystok 2009, p. 273.

Other Ukrainian Groups vis-à-vis the anti-Polish Operation

19.1 The Ukrainian Partisan Army of Taras Bulba-Borovets

Before the formation of Banderite partisan units in Volhynia, there existed the so-called First Ukrainian Insurgent Army. It was headed by Taras Bulba-Borovets. Before the war, he was probably affiliated with the Petliura movement and went on intelligence missions to the USSR. After September 1939, he fled the Soviets to the General Government but crossed the border back to Polesia intending to create a resistance movement already by 1940.

After the German invasion of the USSR, Bulba-Borovets and a group of his followers disarmed the Soviet militia in Sarny and took control of the town. In November 1941, the Germans forced him to disband his troops (later, several dozen of Bulba-Borovets' former subordinates reportedly were forced to execute several hundred Jews). Immediately after the demobilization, Borovets, who did not exclude the possibility of fighting the Germans, began forming partisan units. In December 1941, he named these the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, thus harkening to the tradition of anti-Soviet insurgency from 1921. While keeping military operations to a minimum, he conducted a successful propaganda campaign. He had a portrait of himself commissioned inside the GG, the photographs of which were distributed among the populace. Thanks to this, Borovets' insurgency and the UPA name quickly gained popularity, disproportionately to the strength and range of his units (numbering two to three thousand men).

To delay the start of combat operations, Borovets negotiated with the Germans and the Soviet partisans in parallel, leading to a ceasefire with both. He also established various political contacts. He was associated with a group of Petliura officers and with Banderite dissidents led by Ivan Mitrynga, often referred to as the OUN-B's left wing. The Melnykites were also interested in cooperation, while relations with the Banderites were strained from the start. On April 9, 1943, a meeting took place at which one of the leaders of the Volhynian OUN-B, Lieutenant Vasyl "Sonar" Ivachiv, presented Bulba with a cooperation proposal: in exchange for submitting to the political leadership of the OUN-B, he was to retain command of the UPA, which would merge with the OUN-B's Military Units. Point eight of Sonar's proposal read:

Purge the entire insurgent territory of the Polish population, which is damaging the Ukrainian cause everywhere through the provocative work of Polish officials inside the German administration and the Polish peasants' mass support for the Bolshevik insurgency¹.

Bulba-Borovets replied:

Only a sovereign state can liberate a territory from its national minorities through population exchange, not a regular army through repression. In response to hostile Polish acts, only the culprits should be punished, not the entire population. The principle of collective and familial responsibility can only be applied by barbarians, not by a cultured army².

Several months later, in a special manifesto, Borovets described recent events as follows:

In March [...] the conspiratorial deficiencies of the [OUN-B's – G.M.] organizational network provoked a premature and general uprising of the Ukrainian police, which led many people to their grave or to German camps and offered the Ukrainian population up to Polish terror, to Volksdeutsche and the like, who entered the police in place of Ukrainians. [...] The OUN's Military Units, pretending to be the UPA and acting as if under orders from Bulba, began shamefully exterminating the Polish civilian population and other national minorities. Instead of professionally striking at German strategic points, Your battle commanders gave weapons to children and women who, for sport, started shooting at Germans from behind every house³.

The actions of the Banderites put Borovets' formation in a difficult situation. On February 19, 1943, Soviet partisans broke their truce with it, initiating a series of skirmishes. The fact the Banderites had taken over the UPA name prompted Taras Bulba to change the name of his formation to the UNRA – Ukrainian People's Revolutionary Army. In this way, he repaid the Banderites by taking the name they had used in 1941. The Banderites however took much worse action against him. On August 19, 1943, at a farmstead near the village of Khmelivka (Kostopil district), they attacked Borovets' staff, taking some of his men prisoner. Among them was his wife – Anna Opochenska-Borovets (of Czech origin). In November, when she was no longer useful as a hostage, Opochenska was murdered under the accusation of being a Polish agent. The Banderites would later claim she had left Borovets to join one of the Soviet

1 Cit. per: Петро Бале́й, *Фронда Степана Бандери в ОУН 1940 р. Причини і наслідки*, Las Vegas 1997, pp. 195-196.

2 *Ibidem*.

3 TsDAVOVU, c. 3833, d. 1, f. 107, p. 5-7.

partisan commanders or that she had been a nurse in the Banderite UPA and departed to Prague.

Historians have not found any evidence that Bulba's subordinates participated in the murders of Polish civilians. Meanwhile, the Polish literature has for many years accused his formation, popularly known as the Bulbites, of numerous crimes. In cases where the identity of the perpetrators could be established, however, they turned out to be Banderites. This does not mean the Bulbites did not fight against the Poles at all – nor can we be sure that they never actually committed any crimes. However, Borovets was undoubtedly opposed to the murder of Poles and tried to limit his troops' operations to clashes against armed opponents. The largest such battle against Poles occurred on September 6, 1943, when UNRA partisans stationed in the village of Viliya encountered a Home Army unit commanded by Bomba-Kochański and a group of Polish communist partisans named after Felix Dzerzhinsky, escorting a grain-gathering expedition. After a full day of combat, the Poles retreated, losing twenty three men. The UNRA also suffered heavy losses: eight Ukrainians (including Ivan Mitrynga) were killed and fifteen wounded.

Finding himself in a hopeless situation, sandwiched between the Banderites, the Soviets, the Poles, and the Germans, Bulba effectively disbanded his troops and approached the Germans with a negotiation proposal on October 5, 1943. For this purpose, he travelled to Warsaw, where he was arrested on December 1 and sent to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp.

In the autumn of 1944 Bulba-Borovets was released from the camp and was admitted to the Ukrainian National Army being formed by the Germans in 1945. He took command of a parachute brigade that was to transfer to Polesia. After the fall of the Third Reich, he was detained by the British on August 19, 1945, who accused him of committing crimes against Poles. On August 14, 1946 he was released, with a special communiqué announcing that, according to investigation findings, "destruction of the struggle of the Polish civilian population and other national minorities by unlawful methods in Ukraine did indeed take place, but these actions were carried out only by partisan units subordinate politically and militarily not to Ataman Bulba, but the radical-fascist party of Stepan Bandera"⁴. Bulba-Borovets then emigrated to the USA, where he died in 1981.

4 See: Sikorski Institute, 30/I/4, Stanisław Paprocki's Collection.

19.2 Melnyk's Oun

After 1941, the two factions of the OUN eventually parted ways. Moreover, German occupation policy caused internal divisions within the OUN-M itself in 1942 over attitudes toward the Germans. Andriy Melnyk was still in favour of cooperation with the Third Reich, flooding Berlin with briefs of this type, though some OUN-M organizers held differing opinions. On May 24-25, 1942, an OUN-M conference was held in Pochaiv during which Oleh Kandyba-Olzhych was appointed Melnyk's successor, and the decision was made to form partisan units to fight against the Germans.

By the spring of 1943, the Melnykites had several partisan units in Volhynia. The strongest was the "Khron" sotnia (later a kurin). On May 13 the Melnykites coordinated their activities with Banderites. They organized ambushes on roads against small German units, killing Orthodox Metropolitan Hromadskyi in one. They also took part in attacks on some Polish towns, such as Kutu, Dłuzek, and Zabłóćce. However, on July 7 the Banderites forcibly disarmed the "Khron" kurin, after which some of its members (including Maks "Maks" Skorupskyi) were incorporated into the UPA.

If in Volhynia the Melnykites and Banderites at least tried to cooperate, in Galicia they aired their mutual dislike in the open. When Yaroslav Baranovskyi, a well-known OUN-M activist, was shot dead by unknown assailants in Lviv on May 11, 1943, the Banderites were immediately accused of the attack. The Banderites rejected this charge in a special statement, but the well-known hatred of the OUN-B and Bandera himself towards Baranovskyi were sufficient grounds to carry out the assassination.

On January 14, 1944, the Melnykites took another blow – unknown assailants killed Colonel Roman Sushka in Lviv. This time, too, suspicions fell on the Banderites (other accounts spoke of the Gestapo, the Home Army, and the Soviet secret service). Both Baranovskyi and Sushka's murders were strongly condemned by Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytskyi. In February, the Galician Melnykites, perhaps in response to Sushka's assassination, issued a proclamation entitled "We Accuse". They charged the UPA with provoking German pacifications against Ukrainians, breaking agreements with OUN-M units, deceitfully disarming them in Volhynia, and finally of committing treacherous murders of political rivals. UPA units were also accused of brutally collecting quotas from Ukrainian peasants, larger than those set by the Germans and Bolsheviks. Senseless, according to the OUN-M, was also the Banderites' operation against the Poles. The Melnykites held that the only result of these actions was the flight of Poles to the cities, which instead of strengthening weakened the Ukrainian element in Volhynia. They warned that transferring

such methods to Eastern Galicia would only bring bloody losses to Ukrainian society.

In the first half of 1944, Melnyk sharply criticized German policy in several speeches in Berlin, and his men attempted to establish contact with the Allies. In response, the Germans repressed the OUN-M. Melnyk and other activists were arrested. Kandyba-Olzhych was sent to the Sachsenhausen camp (where he was murdered).

In late autumn of 1944, the OUN-M leadership, which had gone into exile, met in Bratislava. The deliberations led to the adoption of a document, named the Bratislava Directive after its place of signing, which stated that armed struggle in the current situation had no chance of success and it was therefore decided to transfer all organizational activities to the field of politics and culture.

After the war, the leading representatives of the OUN-M (including Andriy Melnyk, who was released by the Germans at the end of 1944) went into exile. There, they carried out intensive political and propagandistic activities, gradually gaining considerable influence on the parliament of the Ukrainian People's Republic in exile, which upheld the legacy of Ataman Petliura. The last president of the Ukrainian People's Republic in exile was Mykola Plaviuk, who hailed from the OUN-M. After Ukraine declared independence in 1991, he handed over the insignia of power to the first president of the new Ukrainian state: Leonid Kravchuk.

19.3 "Ordinary" Ukrainians vis-à-vis the anti-Polish Operation

A problem that has not been investigated by historians to this day is the attitude of the Ukrainian population towards Banderite actions. It seems that the UPA's activities in Volhynia had significant societal support in this region. It should be noted, however, that while the destruction of distant Polish villages was accepted to a certain degree, the killing of Polish neighbours often aroused resistance. It is also worth remembering that any opposition to the UPA was severely punished through beatings or the death penalty (in cases of aiding Poles, it was usually the latter). As Wincenty Romanowski noted:

Some Ukrainians observed the extermination operations with pain and horror. Opposition was unthinkable, and any criticism ended tragically. On many occasions, loyalty to ideology and "Independent Ukraine" were tested by ordering the killing of one's best among Polish neighbours, sometimes even a friend. Those who did not carry out the order were killed themselves. The Ukrainian population, embedded in the countryside for centuries, did not even allow

the thought of escaping in such cases to avoid the crime. There was no place to go⁵.

Despite this, there were open protests against the Banderites' actions. The mysterious Volhynian Ukrainian Committee appears in Polish reports. Mysterious, because we don't know the name of any of its members. We can only guess that it most likely consisted of immigrants from the area of Transnistrian Ukraine – unless, of course, this was disinformation from the Polish underground. This Committee issued a proclamation calling on Ukrainians to cease the murders:

The planned killing operation of Poles is the most horrible crime of the Ukrainians. [...] Villagers, Ukrainian intelligentsia, Fathers implore your sons and if necessary, die in struggle against them. And never enter into the evil carried out by the stupefied blinded son. [...] All those who contribute to murder, to robbery, whether consciously or not, future history will condemn and curse⁶.

The Polish underground assessed the proclamation as follows: "This Committee [...] strongly condemns the crimes against and murders of Poles – however, it does not have much influence among the broader masses of the Ukrainian population in Volhynia and its calls remain unheeded for the time being"⁷.

In many accounts and publications, we can find information about Poles being rescued by Ukrainians. For example, Janina Martosińska from the village of Ostrówki recalled: "My school friend hid with her younger brother (during a UPA attack – G.M.). After the massacre, they went out to look for their parents. Suddenly one Ukrainian appeared, took them by the hand and told them to hide. That is how they survived"⁸. Another resident of Volhynia, Mieczysław Paszkowski, compiled a small catalogue of "human reflexes" he had heard of at the time: "Somewhere one Ukrainian woman managed to stop the rabid butchers with her cry. Elsewhere someone revived an unconscious victim with a bucket of cold water. Another time, faking inattention, they allowed convicts being led to their death to escape. Some, at the risk of their own lives, warned their Polish neighbours: 'Flee, as they will come for you tonight'"⁹. Romuald Niedzielka's research shows that there were at least 493 cases of aid provided by 794 individuals in Volhynia. 1806 Poles were saved¹⁰. This list is certainly not complete. Volhynia's Ukrainian Protestants felt particularly negatively about

5 Wincenty Romanowski, *Kainowe dni ...*, p. 77.

6 SPP, 263/II MSW, Wydział Stołeczny, *Odezwa Wołyńskiego Komitetu Ukraińskiego*, p. 51.

7 *Ibidem*.

8 Cit. per: *Wołyński testament ...*, p. 104.

9 Cit. per: *Śladami ludobójstwa na Wołyniu ...*, p. 270.

10 *Kresowa Księga Sprawiedliwych 1939-1945. O Ukraińcach ratujących Polaków poddanych eksterminacji przez OUN i UPA*, ed. Romuald Niedzielko, Warsaw 2007, p. 20.

the operation against the Poles. They did not oppose the UPA's fighting objectives but rather its methods. One should also not forget that those who rescued Poles were often murdered by the UPA as a result. Among them were persons from mixed marriages who refused to follow an order to kill their own spouse.

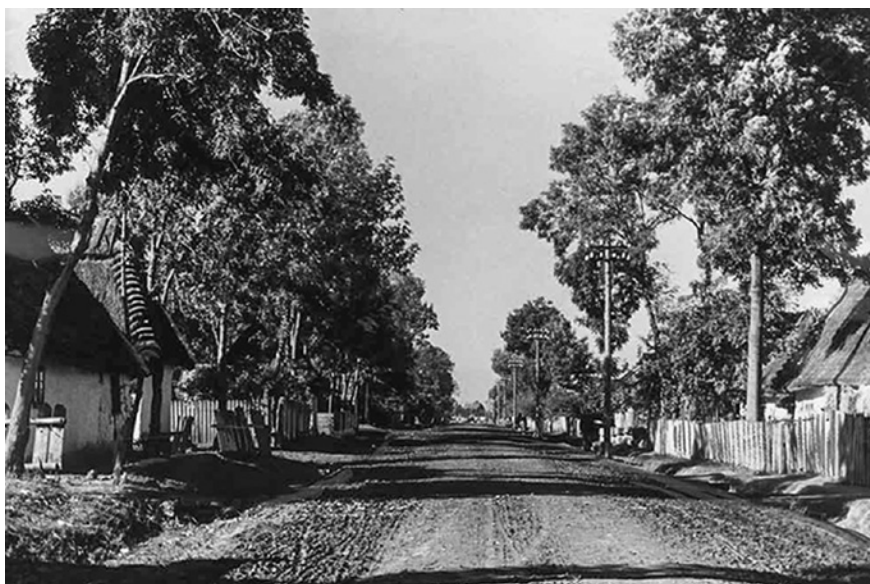


Fig. 45 A main road in one of the villages of Galicia inhabited by Ukrainians, June 1943.

Available materials give the general impression that support for the anti-Polish operation was smaller in Eastern Galicia than in Volhynia. They paint an interesting picture of the Ukrainian community's attitudes. After the murder of a dozen or so Poles in Błożew in Dobromil district in November 1943, for example, it was noted that the killing

shocked the [Ukrainian – G.M.] masses [...] the Ukrainian population leaned neither towards the side of the wronged parties nor the side of the perpetrators. At first, some thought it was the work of communist bands [...] while others attributed it to the UNS (the majority). Even when the Ukrainian population concluded it was most likely committed by the UNS, they did not concede to the wisdom behind such a “leap”, especially to the manner of its execution. Mainly the murder of women and children aroused distaste. That is not to say anything of the intelligentsia – they oppose all such forms of terror¹¹.

11 TsDAVOVU, c. 3833, d. 1, v. 131, p. 7.

One report from the OUN's Przemyśl district made an interesting assessment of the population's attitude towards the UPA's actions. The population namely:

is afraid of the consequences of the anti-Polish operations (the intelligentsia most strongly) that are taking place in Galicia, and for this reason, puts forward the following arguments against us: 1/ the Bolsheviks will ruthlessly retaliate for them, which the Poles themselves are now doing. 2/ The Poles, by fleeing the countryside, are strengthening Polishness in the cities. 3/ The effect of these actions is compromising in the international arena¹².

One may be surprised by the evident dislike, not to say hatred, towards one's own intelligentsia that can sometimes be seen in OUN reports. One such document went so far as to state: "Our intelligentsia are mostly slaves in stiff collars"¹³. The report's author was angered by the reluctance of Lviv doctors to join UPA ranks. Another situation report from Lviv for April 1944 reads:

The anti-Polish operations are viewed positively by the masses alongside such shortcomings as the killing of women and children, the intelligentsia disagrees with these actions, not so much on humanitarian grounds, but more out of fear for culpability¹⁴.

The image of the Ukrainian intelligentsia in Polish materials is different, however. According to reports from the Polish underground, one prominent Ukrainian lawyer was to have said:

I sincerely regret the cases of murder, not out of sympathy for the Poles, but because I am aware of the disastrous consequences they will have, especially once these lands are regained by the Polish state¹⁵.

In another Polish report we read:

The Ukrainian intelligentsia condemns the murders in front of the Poles, but among themselves, they speak highly of the operation (this from a conversation overheard between engineers Merunovych and Rabel, and an unknown Ukrainian priest in the office of the Stanyslaviv magistrate)¹⁶.

Just as in Volhynia, there were many instances of Ukrainians aiding Poles in Eastern Galicia once the mass anti-Polish operation began. Romuald Niedzielko

12 TsDAVOVU, c. 3833, d.1, f. 153, p. 7, Report for 28 March-29 April 1944.

13 *Ibidem*, c. 3833, d. 1, f. 126, p. 62.

14 *Ibidem*, p. 71.

15 SPP, *Sprawozdanie sytuacyjne z ziem polskich za grudzień 1943–luty 1944 roku*, p. 62.

16 *Ibidem*, p. 61.

offers the number of 488 Ukrainians who in Eastern Galicia saved 628 Poles¹⁷. Among those who engaged in helping Poles were also Greek Catholic priests. In Baligród, where forty two Poles were executed on August 6, 1944, a group of men at Sunday mass avoided death only because Greek Catholic priest Olenko, who happened to be a guest in the village, covered the entrance to the church with his own body, not allowing UPA members to cross its threshold (in another account he only saved the local priest). On the other hand, in March of 1944 in Bóbrka district, Father Bereziuk and a group of lay Ukrainians negotiated with a UPA unit for the release of several dozen Poles kidnapped in Rakowiec.

17 *Kresowa ...*, p. 20.

Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytskyi: Catechesis in a Time of Contempt

The dominant religion of the Ukrainian population in Eastern Galicia was Greek Catholicism. This church, founded in 1596 as a result of the Union of Brest (the Orthodox living in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth recognized the authority of the Pope while retaining their own rite), took on a distinctly national (read: Ukrainian) character in the 19th century. During World War II, the Greek Catholic Church was headed by Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytskyi, who held office from 1901. He came from a Polish-Ukrainian family, and his faithful initially received him with distrust. They feared he would take a pro-Polish stance in national disputes in Eastern Galicia. However, time has shown that the Metropolitan was always consistently in favour of respecting the rights of Ukrainians. In 1918, Sheptytskyi recognized the government of the West Ukrainian People's Republic and supported it in the international arena, even after the end of the Polish-Ukrainian War of 1918-1919, the outcome of which he considered a profound injustice.

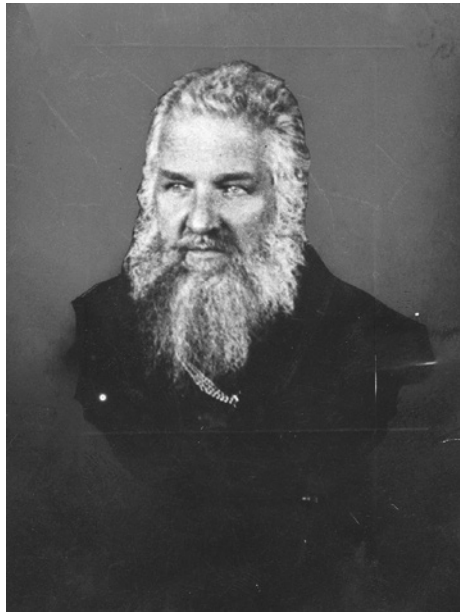


Fig. 46
Andrey Sheptytskyi, Greek Catholic
archbishop, metropolitan of Lviv between
1901-1944. Photograph from 1938.

In the interwar period, Archbishop Sheptytskyi remained loyal to the Second Polish Republic, advocating an organic work program, actively supporting the development of Ukrainian culture, education, and economic life. He openly criticized instances of discrimination against the Ukrainian minority, such as the pacification of 1930 and the destruction of Orthodox churches in the Lublin land. Congruently, however, he strongly condemned terrorism as a method of political struggle. After the assassination of school director Ivan Babiý by the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists in 1934, he categorically stated:

Director Babiý has fallen victim to Ukrainian terrorists. Horror has gripped the whole nation. They treacherously kill the best of patriots, a deserving citizen [...] all deserving and reasonable Ukrainians will fall at the hands of these assassins, for there is no rational Ukrainian who would not oppose such criminal action. [...] We shall never cease to repeat that a crime is always a crime, that a holy cause cannot be served with bloodstained hands¹.

The outbreak of World War II put Archbishop Sheptytskyi to the toughest test. In September 1939, he issued a proclamation calling on the Ukrainian community to remain calm and not act out against the Polish state. He was deeply shaken by the communist repressions that befell the inhabitants of Eastern Galicia during the 1939-1941 Soviet occupation, which is probably why he issued a proclamation welcoming German troops immediately after they entered Lviv, or why he supported the formation of Yaroslav Stetsko's government by Ukrainian nationalists. In the latter case, however, the hypothesis that he was convinced the new authorities were governed at least by the entire OUN, not solely by representatives of a single Banderite faction, seems quite plausible. He undoubtedly hoped for the creation of a free Ukraine with German assistance. In letters sent in the second half of 1941 to representatives of the German authorities, he expressed his hope for the creation of an independent Ukrainian state allied with the Third Reich. Quite quickly, however, he began to realize that he was dealing with a very different German state than the one he remembered from the days of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. "This is not Goethe's Germany", he was to say a few years later.

The Metropolitan was most moved by the monstrous crimes committed by the Nazis, above all by the extermination of Jews. That is why, in early 1942, in a letter to SS chief Heinrich Himmler, he asked whether he was aware of the atrocities committed by German soldiers and expressed the expectation that Ukrainians serving in the auxiliary police would not be used for anti-Semitic

¹ *List pasterski metropolity Andrzeja Szeptyckiego w sprawie zabójstwa dyrektora gimnazjum Iwana Babija*, "Dziło", no 205, 5 VII 1934; reprinted in: "Sprawy Narodowościowe" 1934, no 4.

operations. At the same time, he initiated a pastoral campaign to sensitize the Greek Catholic faithful to the issue of protecting human life. In his letters, pastoral messages, and statements to priests, he repeatedly reminded them that the death penalty could only be imposed by lawful state authorities, and even then only on perpetrators of the most heinous crimes, whose guilt had been proven in a fair trial and who showed no hope for reform. He recanted that those who commit murder commit an extremely grave sin, excluding themselves from the community of believers and condemn themselves to eternal damnation. A sin only redeemable by severe penance. Greek Catholic priests were obliged to pass on these appeals to their faithful in the parishes. At the same time, they were to encourage Greek Catholics to shun persons stained with this sin, thus inducing them to change their position.

The metropolitan's best-known pastoral message is a letter titled "Thou shalt not kill", published in November 1942, a kind of summary of the metropolitan's previous teachings on respect for the Fifth Commandment. In it we read:

The murderer excludes himself from God's fellowship [...] and draws upon himself God's great punishment in eternity and God's terrible curse in this world. [...] In the dark soul of the murderer occurs what is described with such force in the psalm. [...] The wound of his soul stinks and rots in his living and still walking corpse. The murderer has spurned the blessing of God's law and it has distanced itself from him. Such [...] is [...] the fate of the murderer in this world, and an eternity spent with the devil and his angels. [...] The man who sheds the innocent blood of his enemy, his political opponent, is as much a murderer as he who does so for plunder, and just as deserving of God's punishment and the curse of the Church².

The metropolitan's intentions become fully understandable in light of his letter to Pope Pius XII from August 1942. It shows that Archbishop Sheptytskyi was seriously concerned about the demoralization of the Ukrainian community caused by the German occupation, and tried to prevent the Greek Catholic faithful from being drawn into the extermination of the Jews and thus from committing mortal sin. His subsequent reminders of the need to respect the Fifth Commandment served precisely this purpose, just as his parallel statements on mercy were intended to encourage aid to all who needed it and thus also to Jews seeking rescue.

The fact that the metropolitan's efforts not only concerned Ukrainians is also demonstrated by his personal commitment to saving Jews. Although he was confined to a wheelchair, he was able to establish a Greek Catholic network

² *Metropolita Andrzej Szeptycki. Pisma wybrane*, eds. Maria H. Szeptycka, f. Marek Skórka, Kraków 2000, pp. 408-410.

dedicated to rescuing people of Jewish origin. At his request, the archbishop's confidants hid many people in monasteries, among them Rabbi David Kahane, Kurt Lewin, and Adam Daniel Rotfeld. It is worth emphasizing, though, that this whole spiritual crusade, if one may call it that, in defence of life concerned above all the extermination of Jews and not to the murder of Poles. Although the archbishop had been previously disturbed by plans to murder Polish intelligentsia and priests (as early as 1941), by the end of 1942 he was attributing intentions to destroy the "entire Ukrainian and Polish intelligentsia" to the Germans³.

Only the metropolitan's pastoral messages from 1943-1944 could refer directly to the situation of the Poles. In a letter to the faithful from August of 1943, Archbishop Sheptytskyi noted:

We have even witnessed terrible murders carried out by young people, perhaps even with good intentions, but with disastrous consequences for the nation. We have occasionally seen people who [...] gave orders to kill someone for the good of the cause. [...] Unfortunately, such incidents have created a false conviction among the youth that it is permissible to deprive someone of their life.

Further on in his letter, the archbishop firmly reminded that failure to observe the Fifth Commandment brings "the curse of Heaven upon the soul", imposing on the perpetrator "a stigma that no penance can erase". Concurrently, in the face of the youth's disobedience, he appealed to parents:

Guard the lives and property of your neighbours in the name of Christian civilization and in the name of the Christian social order we would like to one day see in our independent, common, Ukrainian state. Rest assured that everything you do in the direction of this neighbourly love will bring God's blessing upon your family and your village.

The metropolitan also asked that the letter be read and discussed by the Orthodox brotherhoods. Their members were thus obliged to save people in any danger. It reads:

Let them, first of all, find out whether there is [...] any threat to the village, whether anyone is in danger of being killed. They should then consider what can be done to save someone's life; finally, they should receive Holy Communion with the intention of carrying out this important social work⁴.

3 *Митрополит Андрей Шептицький. Документи і матеріали 1941-1944*, ed. Жанна Ковба, Kyiv 2003, p. 266.

4 *List pasterski metropolity Szeptyckiego do duchowieństwa i wiernych*, in: "Znak" 1988, no. 9, pp. 75-77.

The August 1943 letter was received with enthusiasm by the Front for the Rebirth of Poland (FOP). This was a small underground organization of Catholic activists, led by well-known writer Zofia Kossak-Szczucka (it was under her influence, among others, that the Council to Aid Jews i.e. Żegota was established). The FOP reprinted the Metropolitan's letter in its press organ "Prawda" for August-September 1943 with an editorial comment emphasizing the importance of his words: "The Metropolitan's voice is all the more unique in that it does not limit itself to the condemnation of murder and lawlessness, but calls on Ukrainians to defend the lives and property of the population under threat from acts of terror"⁵. "Biuletyn Informacyjny", the main press organ of the Home Army, evaluated the archbishop's letter in a more low-key manner, probably closer to reality:

Although the pastoral letter does not explicitly mention the murder of Poles by Ukrainians, it nevertheless contains strong condemnation of such methods of fighting, like killing individuals or destroying their property, and points out the negative consequences that such acts will have for the Ukrainian nation. Unfortunately, the behaviour of even the Greek Catholic clergy is far from the advice contained in the Metropolitan Priest's pastoral letter⁶.

Home Army commander General Tadeusz "Bór" Komorowski informed the authorities in London about the metropolitan's speech in a report from August 19, 1943, in which he informed of the UPA's crimes in Volhynia. He described the archbishop's letter as a call: "to the faithful for a Christian peace"⁷.

As we see, the Polish underground received the actions of Metropolitan Sheptytskyi more or less positively. It is known that, from 1940 onwards, representatives of the resistance movement periodically contacted the Metropolitan in attempts to soften anti-Polish sentiments among the Ukrainians. According to Ryszard Torzecki, Archbishop Sheptytskyi was also sympathetic to talks conducted during the war between the Polish and Ukrainian underground, trying to facilitate them as far as possible in the hope that disputes would be settled peacefully (yet always stressing the need to satisfy Ukrainians' aspirations)⁸.

Surprisingly, the Roman Catholic clergy was far more critical of the archbishop. This is evident in correspondence between the Metropolitan and Archbishop Bolesław Twardowski, head of the Roman Catholic Metropolis in

5 *List pasterski metropolity Szeptyckiego do duchowieństwa ...*, p. 78.

6 Cit. per: Grzegorz Mazur, Jerzy Skwara, Jerzy Węgiński, *Kronika 2350 dni wojny i okupacji Lwowa 1 IX 1939-5 II 1946*, Katowice 2007, p. 363.

7 *Armia Krajowa w dokumentach*, v. 3, Wrocław-Warsaw-Kraków-Gdańsk-Lódź 1990, p. 60.

8 Ryszard Torzecki, *Polacy i Ukraińcy ...*, p. 150.

Lviv, published in 1992 by Father Professor Józef Wolczański⁹. The content of this tremendously interesting and dramatic exchange of letters is worth recalling. At this point, attention should be drawn to one small but important matter. In the above-mentioned letters, Archbishop Sheptytskyi did not capitalize the words “Poles” and “Ukrainians”, as per Ukrainian spelling conventions. The occasionally repeated opinion that the metropolitan only wrote the word “Poles” lowercase, thus expressing his alleged aversion to that nation, is therefore untrue.

Archbishop Bolesław Twardowski asked the Greek Catholic Metropolitan to issue a pastoral letter condemning the massacres committed against Poles in his first letter dated July 30, 1943. In response, Archbishop Sheptytskyi sent Archbishop Twardowski two of his pastoral letters urging the faithful to respect the Fifth Commandment with the suggestion they be published in the Polish press. At the same time, he asked that letters from Polish bishops “that condemned and warned against hatred toward the Ukrainian population” be sent back to him, declaring they would be disseminated in Greek Catholic publications. On September 13, 1943, the Metropolitan sent another, much more emotional, letter to Archbishop Twardowski, probably moved by news of the murder of Professor Andriy Lastovetskyi in Lviv by a Home Army unit the day before. This would explain why he asked Archbishop Twardowski to address both this tragic death and the wave of murders of Ukrainians in the Lublin region, where, according to him, about five hundred people had already been killed by Polish hands. Additionally, he asked to “publicly scorn and warn about the politics of hatred giving rise to such numerous and notorious crimes”.

Archbishop Twardowski could not leave the Greek Catholic metropolitan's letter and suggestions unanswered. In his response dated October 15, he pointed out that the mass murders of the Polish population, so far recorded only in Volhynia, had “jumped over” to Eastern Galicia, describing in detail cases of murder of Roman Catholic priests. Following this elaboration, he sensibly noted:

How, then, would my appeal to cease the killing of those faithful to the Greek Catholic rite look to my persecuted, terrified diocesans in such circumstances, when at the same time no one but they themselves are being exterminated and murdered, uncertain of the day or hour.

9 F. Józef Wolczański, *Korespondencja arcybiskupa Bolesława Twardowskiego z arcybiskupem Andrzejem Szeptyckim w latach 1943-1944*, “Przegląd Wschodni”, 1992/1993, v. II, i. 2.



Fig. 47
Bolesław Twardowski, Latin rite
archbishop metropolitan of Lviv
(1923-1944).

Archbishop Twardowski also unequivocally expressed his conviction that the perpetrators of the murders of Poles were Ukrainian Greek Catholics who did not recognize the “pastoral power and influence” of the Metropolitan. Concurrently, not only did he not refer to the situation of the Ukrainian population in the Lublin region, he expressed his doubt that Poles were behind the “deplorable” murder of Lastovetsyi, stating firmly with a somewhat (in this context) surprising self-confidence: “I thank God [...] that my diocesans have not stained their hands with the blood of their fellow man”.

Archbishop Sheptytskyi must have received this letter with mixed emotions. In his reply dated November 15, 1943, he thus bitterly asked: “I do not deny that among Greek Catholics there are some who do not listen to the voice of their bishop. But does Your Excellency assume that all Latinists are so good they no longer require a public warning from their arch-pastor?” In the letter, he also tried to give his assessment of the situation at the time. He rejected the thesis that all murders of Poles were the work of Ukrainians. In his opinion, many attacks amounted to robbery and were committed by gangs of various nationalities, often under communist influence. In his opinion, the mass murders of Poles in Volhynia were preceded by “numerous murders” of Ukrainians in the Chełm region (in this regard, he expressed a belief common among the Ukrainian public in Galicia). Assessing his own stance, he stated:

“In these terrible times I have fulfilled my duty by reminding the faithful of the commandment ‘Thou shalt not kill’ and by warning them against political and national hatred”. Concluding, he expressed the opinion that Roman Catholic bishops should also warn their faithful “against unchristian politics, against national hatred and bloodshed”.

The correspondence, as we see, reveals significant differences in perception of the situation between the two archbishops at the time. Thus, in the last known letter dated March 8, 1944, Archbishop Twardowski, after citing several examples of crimes against Poles, asked only that Greek Catholic priests save from profanation the Eucharist vessels that remained in destroyed Polish churches.

I would be hard pressed to conclude that the correspondence with Archbishop Twardowski had no effect. As I suspect, it was due to its influence that the “Common Message of all Ukrainian Ordinaries, Metropolitan Coadjutors, all Auxiliary Bishops, Administrators and Apostolic Visitors” promulgated in November 1943, which warned the faithful against the sin of hatred, included these words: “It is clear we condemn every murder, regardless the perpetrator, we condemn both those crimes of which we ourselves are the victims and those committed by our own people. Blood innocently shed always and everywhere cries out to heaven for vengeance”¹⁰. Similarly, it may have influenced the “Message to the Clergy and Faithful ‘Peace in the Lord (On the Killing of Priests)’”, issued in early 1944. This was written at a time when the UPA’s mass anti-Polish operation had already spread to Eastern Galicia and clearly referred to the Polish-Ukrainian conflict. The archbishop explicitly pointed to murders of priests of all denominations and rites in the Lviv archdiocese (including Roman Catholics and Orthodox) in the letter’s opening, strongly condemning the use of such methods “be it in factional, national, or political struggle”. The archbishop clearly opposed any division of the two Catholic rites:

Whoever by his conduct severs and opposes the unity of the two Catholic denominations, which differ only in their rites, and thus creates in the faithful of one rite resentment, grudge, hatred against the faithful of the other, he strikes a blow at that most essential element of the Church which is all-embracing brotherly love.

The metropolitan also warned against hatred and vengeance, considering it particularly wrong to persecute not the actual enemy, but instead “his innocent family members and loved ones”. Later in the message, he stated categorically:

¹⁰ Cit. per: *Metropolita Andrzej Szeptycki. Pisma ...*, p. 426.

Even pagan nations considered it an unworthy crime and dishonourable act for a man to kill the defenceless. We protest against these crimes most of all when their perpetrators are the enemies of the Church of Christ. But as we perceive the danger that these crimes can and do make their way [...] into the ranks of even the faithful entrusted to us, then [...] out of fear for the future of the Christian people we will not cease to warn the faithful against them¹¹.

These words were a clear condemnation of the methods used by the Banderite movement against the Poles. Undoubtedly, the crimes committed by the OUN and UPA sparked indignation in the archbishop. At the same time, however, the metropolitan condemned all killings of innocent people in his message, particularly priests, thus in a way giving equal weight to the fate of both Roman and Greek Catholic priests, as well as Orthodox priests. Yet, though at the turn of 1943 some Ukrainian priests were killed by the Polish underground, it was precisely Polish clergy who were then universally condemned to death by the OUN and UPA. This raises the question: why did the archbishop not condemn the anti-Polish operation directly?

In this matter, we are left with only conjecture. One can wonder, for example, whether the metropolitan understood the great tragedy of the Polish population he was dealing with. He of course knew about the mass killings of Poles, if only from the letters of Archbishop Twardowski, but could have thought they were just one more pogrom out of the many that had swept through these lands, always fleeting. It is likely he simply could not accept the notion that there could exist an organized extermination of the Polish population, planned and carried out by Ukrainians. Thus, he so readily believed it to be the work of anarchy-induced bands not recognizing any central authority even if linked to the Banderites.

However, possible misjudgment of the situation was not the only thing that influenced the metropolitan's decision not to issue a letter condemning the anti-Polish operations. Archbishop Sheptytskyi was well aware that his every statement had not only a moral and religious character but a political one too. This probably stood behind his fear that unilateral condemnation of the Banderite's anti-Polish actions would later be used against Ukrainian aspirations for independence. Aware of the real divergence between Polish and Ukrainian interests, all the while condemning non-Christian methods of combat, he strongly supported the creation of an independent Ukraine that would include Lviv inside its borders.

11 *Письма-послання Митрополита Андрея Шептицького, ЧСБВ з часів німецької окупації*, Yorkton–Saskatchewan 1969, pp. 431–432.

Be that as it may, one should not forget that even if the Greek Catholic Church leader had openly condemned the UPA's actions, it would hardly have changed the ongoing situation. Metropolitan Sheptytskyi's moral teachings could not stop the wave of crimes as his words were simply ignored by the public, and in particular by OUN-B organizers.

Interestingly, the metropolitan was rather aware of his limited capabilities. In one of his speeches reprinted by "Lvivskyi Arkheparkhiyalni Vidomosty" from 1943 we read:

I wrote two letters and a decree to the synod about the murder, but I do not have the impression that the letter or decree, or the laws passed, have advanced or altered the matter even by a hair [...] Christian societies are so sensitive to the shedding of human blood that people turn their backs on executioners with particular horror, on people who in the name of national justice carry out death sentences on the condemned [...] the arrival of an executioner shook the whole population to its core [...] he was avoided on the street, no restaurant wanted to receive him [...]. And yet he carried out court sentences [...]. Now [...] we meet people who tell us just how they killed people [...] they boast that there is no greater pleasure for them than to shed blood. How to convert such persons, how to heal human nature? How to stop this cry of bloodshed, which howls out to heaven for vengeance? [...] Only the grace of Almighty God can help us, we have only one effective means – prayer¹².

Available documents reveal a clear distance between Archbishop Sheptytskyi and the OUN-B/UPA. He referred, for example, to the Banderites' actions thus: "It is an unhealthy symptom that the young, sometimes the very young, want to order around elders through threats. They justify themselves stating they act for the common good and on the orders of their leaders [...]. At times, the young behave as if they were receiving orders from the enemies of the Ukrainian people. The influence of atheists-communists is visible through and through"¹³. One should therefore treat information about the metropolitan's alleged positive contacts with UPA commander Roman Shukhevych with great caution, likewise his sending a representative to a congress of this formation's political superstructure – i.e. the Ukrainian Supreme Liberation Council. It is also peculiar that the metropolitan's supposed observer, Father Galiant, did not make it to the deliberations at all. Lev Shankovskiy, who was present, did note with irritation the opinions that blamed Ukraine's "youth politicians" for the state of Polish-Ukrainian relations, which circulated among the

12 Cit. per: *Bóg i Jego polska owczarnia w dokumentach 1939-1945*, introduction and selection: Krzysztof Jasiewicz, Warsaw-London 2009, p. 332.

13 *Ibidem*, p. 427.

Ukrainians themselves, and criticized Metropolitan Sheptytskyi for “issuing a proclamation [to the faithful – G. M.], ignoring the fact that the Polish bishop had not issued one”¹⁴. As can be guessed, Shankovskyi probably had in mind the above mentioned “Message to the Clergy and Faithful ‘Peace in the Lord (On the Killing of Priests)’”.

There is no doubt that priests who had joined the Ukrainian insurgency (probably a few dozen) supported the Bandera movement “on their own account”. Though, as we know, the situation was different with the chaplains in the SS “Galizien” division. They found themselves there undoubtedly with the Greek Catholic Church head’s consent. One can only wonder whether this was simply an expression of concern for the salvation of the soldiers (as it was officially presented), or whether it also represented conditional support for the division’s very idea, conceived as a nucleus for Ukrainian armed forces. The metropolitan’s differing treatment of the UPA and SS “Galizien” division is also confirmed by Soviet secret service documents. In one such file, a secret NKVD-NKGB collaborator reported his conversation with Archbishop Sheptytskyi, in which the latter said:

I condemn the UPA and Banderite activities, while the Melnykites and men of the “SS-Halitsia” division – I absolve. Their intentions were good, but the Germans deceived them, and it is now necessary to cut off any orientation towards the Germans ... Currently, in the international situation that has arisen, the only choice is to go along with the Soviet authorities¹⁵.

In this context, it is not surprising that after the Red Army’s entry the metropolitan condemned the UPA’s actions. Regardless of the distance between him and the Banderites, Archbishop Sheptytskyi believed then that the partisans’ activity was only causing the Ukrainian civilian population, now exposed to Soviet repression, to suffer.

Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytskyi died on November 1, 1944. The Soviet authorities agreed to give him a ceremonial burial. However, this would be one of the final manifestations of tolerance towards Greek Catholics. On April 8, 1945, the newspaper “Vilna Ukraina” published an article by Yaroslav Halan titled “With a Cross or Knife”, which accused the Greek Catholic Church of collaboration with the Third Reich. The article was reprinted by all newspapers published in the USSR. This was a signal for the onset of repressions. On April 11, 1945, Archbishop Josyf Slipyi, the Metropolitan’s successor, was

14 Літопис УПА, в. 26, р. 491.

15 Митрополит Андрей Шептицький у документах радянських органів державної безпеки (1939-1944 рр.), Київ 2005, р. 264.

arrested along with all other bishops. Their fate was soon to be shared by many rank-and-file priests. They were sent to labour camps, where some of them died a martyr's death. In March 1946, the Greek Catholic Church was "united" with the Orthodox Church at a special congress in Lviv. From then until the end of the 1980s cultivation of the Greek Catholic rite became a subversive activity. The fact that the Greek Catholic Church survived those years of brutal communist repression and is today one of the most important religious communities in Ukraine is in large part thanks to Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytskyi.

The Soviets are Approaching

21.1 Operation Tempest

By early spring of 1944, the Red Army had reached Eastern Galicia. In March the Soviets occupied the districts of Kolomyia and Horodenka and began the battle for Ternopil, which had been designated a stronghold by the Nazis. The city only fell after five weeks of extremely heavy fighting. German efforts and the exhaustion of the Soviet troops meant that the front briefly stabilized on the Kovel-Brody-Kolomyia line, only about 80 km from Lviv.

On June 23, 1944, after a drumfire bombardment, the Red Army embarked on one of the most important offensive operations of World War II, codenamed “Bagration”. The offensive, spearheaded by the 1st and 2nd Belorussian Fronts, led to the liberation of Belarus and the destruction of German Army Group Center within a few weeks. On July 18 troops of the 1st Belorussian Front’s southern wing crossed the Bug River and, advancing rapidly, captured Dęblin and Puławy, reaching the Vistula River line on July 25.

The momentary calm in Galicia was interrupted on July 13, 1944, by an offensive of the 1st Ukrainian Front under Marshal Ivan Konev. It took the Soviet troops several days (July 17–22) to encircle and destroy eight German divisions, including the 14th Waffen SS “Galizien” Division, in the Brody region of Lviv Province. On the morning of July 22, 1944, the 10th Guards Panzer Corps, part of the 4th Panzer Army, approached Lviv, initiating the battle for the city.

The Soviet offensive prompted the Home Army leadership to launch Operation Tempest. Already in March of 1944 Home Army units in the region of Ternopil, later Stanivslaviv district as well, began carrying out operations. As Red Army units approached Lviv, local Home Army conspiratorial cells also became active. From the first moments of the fight for Lviv Soviet armoured units were supported by Home Army soldiers from the 5th Infantry Division and 14th Cavalry Regiment. Poles joined in the street fighting, capturing among others the main railway station, gasworks, power station, and Water Supply and Sewage Works. They also blocked some of the approaches to the city, making it difficult for the Germans to move their troops. The Home Army units taking part in the Lviv operation numbered about four thousand men in total, much less than the 27th Volhynian Infantry Division.



Fig. 48 Home Army soldiers during fighting for Lviv, July 1944.

During the fighting, a skirmish reportedly took place with the UPA at St. George's Cathedral. On July 25, 1944, some residents of the city's northern districts experienced a moment of terror when rumours spread that the Germans had sent the SS division "Galizien" to Lviv. The terrified Poles, fearing pogroms and massacres, began fleeing on Lviv's eastern outskirts, with the Home Army managing to restore order only with the greatest difficulty. The desire to retaliate for months of fear led to various mob trials and murders of Ukrainians in the part of the city occupied by the Home Army. Several dozen Ukrainians (most probably about seventy) likely lost their lives at that time.

After several days of fierce clashes, the last German subunits withdrew from Lviv on the morning of July 28, 1944. Polish flags were flown on the captured city hall and numerous houses. As it would turn out, for the final time. Home Army soldiers, as part of the ongoing Operation Tempest, joined in operations against the Germans in the area of Stryi, Boryslav, Drohobych, and Sambir, achieving many minor successes.

Immediately after capturing Lviv, the Soviets began to take control over administration and law enforcement. On July 28, 1944, the Home Army was forced to lay down arms and disband its units, though initially no arrests were made. Instead, a series of talks took place between Home Army commander in Eastern Galicia Colonel Władysław "Janka" Filipkowski (by order of his superiors appearing as a general in the negotiations) and the Soviet leadership, including Nikita Khrushchev. Among Janka's partners was also the head of the NKVD in Lviv region, Commissar of Militia 2nd Rank Yevheniy Hrushko. During the meeting, he thanked the Home Army for saving the power plant

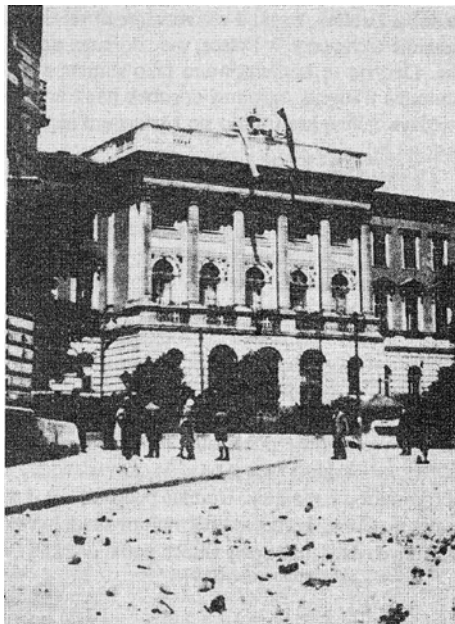


Fig. 49 The building of Lviv Polytechnic with Polish and Soviet flags on the roof, July 1944.

and waterworks from being blown up. He criticized the display of Polish flags on houses, deeming it a provocation:

Gen. Filipkowski replied that Lviv was a Polish city. Hrushko asked: "Which is more important, an island or the ocean?" – Filipkowski replied: "The ocean." – "Well, you see," concluded Hruszko, "Lviv is a Polish island in a Ukrainian ocean"¹.

The fate of not only the Kresy but also of Poland had already been decided by that time. On July 23, 1944, Moscow radio announced that the Manifesto of the Polish Committee of National Liberation (PKWN) had been published the day before in Chełm, which was under the control of the Red Army (though it was actually written in Moscow). This meant that the Polish communists, concentrated mainly within the Polish Workers' Party, were taking over full control of the country. They were almost completely deprived of popular support and could stay in power only thanks to the security provided by Soviet bayonets. One of the PKWN's first decisions was to sign an agreement with the USSR regarding the country's eastern border on July 27, 1944, which was to henceforth more or less run along the so-called Curzon Line. At the beginning of

¹ Cit. per: Grzegorz Mazur, Jerzy Skwara, Jerzy Węgierski, *Kronika 2350 dni ...*, p. 502.

August 1944, NKVD Border Troop outposts were established to instantly begin guarding this new border.

In this situation, talks between the Polish underground and the Soviet authorities were doomed to failure. During the meetings, the Soviets minimized the contribution of the Home Army in fighting the Germans and emphasized the necessity of accepting the fact that Lviv would become part of the USSR. They had only one proposal for the Polish underground – to join the Polish army units under the PKWN's authority. On July 31, 1944, Colonel Filipkowski left alongside several officers for talks on the matter with General Michał Żymierski in Zhytomyr (without the consent of Home Army HQ, but with the approval of the Regional Government Delegate). As it seems, the Lviv underground was ready to make some concessions to the communist side, if the latter agreed to form a separate Lviv division within Berling's army. This was obviously unacceptable to the Soviets. In the evening of July 31, right after Filipkowski's departure, officers of the Home Army's Lviv District were summoned for a briefing at 9 PM at headquarters on 27 Kochanowski Street, where they supposedly discussed the formation of a Home Army division. The meeting turned out to be a trap. Twenty-five to thirty officers were arrested, and an "encirclement" was set up inside the building, where a further forty-eight people were detained the next day. Representatives of the Government Delegation were also imprisoned. The district delegate himself, Adam Ostrowski, was taken to prison in Lublin, where he was quickly persuaded to publicly support the PKWN. During the night of August 2, 1944, Soviet special services arrested Colonel Filipkowski and the officers accompanying him in Zhytomyr. He was released only in 1947; he returned to Poland but died three years later, emaciated by captivity. This was only the beginning of the NKVD's "hunt" for Home Army soldiers, which was carried out on all territories occupied by the Red Army.

Regardless of the arrests of Home Army soldiers, the Soviet authorities announced a muster in Eastern Galicia. Poles were sent to the "people's" Polish Army, while western Ukrainians were commissioned to the Red Army. In addition to providing the Soviet leadership with the "cannon fodder" it needed, the purpose of the conscription was to weaken the ability and will of the Polish population in Galicia to resist.

However, the Soviet manhunts covered only part of the Home Army units that had been revealed during Operation Tempest. About one thousand six hundred soldiers commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Franciszek "Topór" Rekucki withdrew to Rzeszów region, where the Soviet manhunts were less severe. There, preserving their organizational structure, they survived the winter of 1944/1945 without major losses, hoping to be able to return to Lviv

in the spring. Some members of the underground descended deeper into the conspiracy.

Though Operation Tempest failed to fulfill its purpose, it is quite significant for the assessment of the Polish-Ukrainian conflict. It showed irrefutably that the UPA's actions had failed. Poles, despite the numerous Ukrainian partisan operations, retained a significant armed force. If a Polish-Ukrainian war similar to the one in 1918-1919 had taken place, Home Army units would have been able to defend most of the cities against UPA attacks. The Ukrainians did not inflict any significant losses on the Home Army in their anti-Polish campaign. Instead, they managed to wreak terrible havoc among the civilian population.

21.2 The Destruction Battalions

In the summer of 1944, Poles living in Galicia were often faced with a tragic choice: either to be sent to camps or to join Berling's army. Perhaps for this very reason, many of them joined the ranks of a Soviet auxiliary militia subordinated to the NKVD, the so-called Destruction Battalions (*istrebitele*, "destroyers", IB). At least some of the IBs were created out of Home Army units revealed during Tempest. This fact is confirmed by UPA reports. They claimed that, right after the entry of the Soviets (e.g. in Kolomyia, Zabolottia, Sniatyn), Poles organized an administration and police force "that immediately began seeking out Banderites and informing on Ukrainians. This police force then reorganized itself into a Destruction Battalion"². On the other hand, recruitment to this formation was compulsory and many Poles were deployed to it by Soviet wartime recruiting boards, all the more so given the Soviets were aware of the sympathy many western Ukrainians had for the OUN-B and UPA and simply did not trust them. From the point of view of the local Soviet administration, giving weapons to the Poles seemed to be a much safer option.

It is not known how many Poles ended up in the IBs. In the autumn of 1944 at least several thousand people of Polish origin served in these formations. Only at the beginning of 1945 did this number decrease significantly, as the Soviets began moving Poles with their families into Poland. The question of the Polish presence in the IBs raises many emotions today because it is difficult to say to what extent they protected Poles (as former members of this formation claim), and to what extent they provoked the UPA to further actions. However,

2 TsDAHOU, c. 1, d. 23, v. 926, Informational report from Bolshevik activities for 27 March-8 August 1944, Stanyslaviv-Kolomyia.

there is no doubt that the activities of the IBs were treated by the UPA as a serious threat. In one report we read:

A very dangerous opponent for us is the Polish police – it knows places and people [...] it takes part in the Bolshevik militia's anti-Ukrainian operations. That is why we fight those [units – G.M.] of the Polish police that openly cooperate with the Bolsheviks³.

Unfortunately, we know little about the actions carried out by the Polish IBs. From the special release written by Drohobych district prosecutor Krygin to Obkom secretary Oleksenko dated November 13, 1944, we learn of an all-Polish IB's actions in the Komarno region. Thus, according to the regional prosecutor:

soldiers of the IB beat Ukrainian citizens during their operations in Ukrainian villages, b) during the operations they took away citizens' property without having any grounds to do so, c) they burned down houses under the pretext that these were homes of Banderite members, without having any grounds to do so, d) while in the villages [...] soldiers of the IB called Ukrainians bandits, Banderites, e) during the arson they burned alive two women in one of the houses and wounded one man in the hand⁴.

Probably the bloodiest operation carried out by an IB consisting of Poles alongside Soviet forces took place on August 29, 1944. On that day the Soviets, together with IBs from Nadvirna, Bilshivtsi, and Lenchyn, organized a raid on the village of Hrabovets. A clash with a group of partisans hiding in a barn took place; eight Ukrainians were killed. After destroying the UPA group, the attackers, "warmed up" by the fight, began pacifying the village. Three hundred households were burned and several dozen of the captured men were shot. Two women were also wounded, one of whom – connected to the underground – died. In total, eighty-six people were killed and over seventy arrested.

Soviet reports indicate that the IBs operating in the USSR between January 1, 1944, and August 1, 1945 (i.e., in the period when the number of Polish members was at its highest) conducted 26,328 combat operations to "liquidate armed bands". During this time they killed 11,193 people and arrested another 173,580. Additionally, 11,094 of those killed fell into the category of "bandits and their helpers". The same category covered 30,366 of the arrested. Others among the arrested were Red Army deserters (42,217), military service dodgers (33,940), forced-labour fugitives (22,609), and profiteers (9322). IB activities were thus not limited to the self-defence of Polish villages against UPA attacks.

³ GARF, c. 9478, d. 1, v. 126, p. 233.

⁴ Lviv District State Archive (DALO), c. 5001, d. 2, v. 20, p. 15.

The Last Massacres in Eastern Galicia

The arrests targeting the Poles after the Red Army's entry quickly convinced the leaders of the OUN-B and UPA that the Soviets treated Polish independence aspirations similarly to the desires of the Ukrainians. As a result, on September 1, 1944, Galician UPA commander Vasyl "Shelest" Sydor issued an order halting the anti-Polish campaign:

The Poles have been disappointed in their expectations of winning a state through the Bolsheviks. They have realized that they have become an object in the hands of Moscow and play the role of the Negro. There are signs that the Poles are turning away from the NKVD, signalling thus the possibility of moving closer to us. In principle, we are ceasing mass anti-Polish operations. However, these should be consistently continued against any Polish elements collaborating with the NKVD and those organs of Muscovite imperialism that aim at the moral and physical destruction of the Ukrainian people (an example [of how operations should be carried out against Poles collaborating with the USSR – G.M.]: attacking a Polish militia numbering 20 people at some locality. A third or half of them should be destroyed, the rest disarmed and warned that if they do not stop cooperating against us with the Bolsheviks – they will be destroyed next time, too)¹.

Concurrently, it was decided to seek an arrangement with the Poles against the Soviets.

While any earlier declarations dissociating the UPA from anti-Polish operations should be viewed more as an information war intended to lull the enemy's vigilance, in this case, we have a large number of sources that seem to confirm a change in UPA tactics (though not strategy). On March 3, SB commander "Tymchyi" (N.N.) wrote in an order to "Sivyi" (N.N.): "It is forbidden as such to liquidate the Poles, they may only be liquidated if they are traitors"². He included in this category, for example, people who spoke out against the Ukrainian underground at public meetings or rallies.

On the other hand, UPA attacks on Polish villages and the killing of civilians continued occurring after September 1944, being often as brutal as earlier ones. This was probably partially due to UPA partisans' insubordination. In an order issued in November, Shelest severely reprimanded his subordinates

¹ TsDAVOVU, c. 3833, d. 2, v. 3, pp. 64-68.

² *Ibidem*, p. 199-202.

for liquidating “Polish masses” instead of destroying IB posts. However, lower-rank UPA commanders could point to the vagueness of the received orders when defending their actions. Although the OUN-B and UPA instructions encouraged them to seek arrangements with the Poles, at the same time they recommended to “quietly aid in resettling the Polish element [...] to Poland”³.

At the turn of 1944, UPA command carried out a series of attacks on Polish villages in Tarnopol Voivodeship. Their scale and scope leave no doubt as to the organized nature of the entire operation and suggest that the UPA Main Command’s permission to resume the anti-Polish campaign was obtained here. This probably followed the insistence of local commanders who complained about the activity of Polish Destruction Battalions. It is noteworthy that a portion of the attacks targeted precisely those towns where IBs existed. Nine sotnias took part in the operations (including the Siromantsi unit), probably numbering between nine hundred and one thousand men in total. They were supported by local SB and SKW militias.

On October 23, 1944, fifty-eight Poles and fourteen Ukrainians were murdered in the village of Trójca (Zabolottia district). Among the dead were four children between the ages of six months and two years. In late October the Banderites killed twenty Poles in the village of Kluwińce (Kopychyntsi district). On November 21, several Ukrainian families were displaced from Serock village. That same day, IB member Józef Kobyluk was wounded in a UPA ambush, later dying at a hospital in Skalat. His funeral was attended by many people on November 23, mostly women and children, but also ten IB soldiers. As the procession approached the cemetery, it was suddenly fired upon from buildings belonging to deported Ukrainians. Nine women and priest Adam Drzyzga were killed by the first volley (the wounded clergyman was finished off by the attackers with bayonets). The IB soldiers responded with gunfire but began retreating upon losing three people, including their commander. In the meantime, the second group of UPA partisans entered the village and started executing Polish families, particularly those whose members served in the IBs. After the massacre, the Ukrainians dumped Kobyluk’s body from the coffin, laid their single casualty on a cart and retreated. Several dozen Poles had perished.

At least twenty-three attacks on Polish villages were reported in November. In December that number rose to fifty five. The attacks particularly intensified during Christmas and New Year, that is, when defenders’ vigilance was at its lowest. On the night of December 21, Ukrainian partisans simultaneously attacked three villages: Zawadówka, Korzowa, and Toustobaby. In the first

3 GARF, c. 9478, d. 1, v. 292, p. 317.

village, forty seven people were killed including women and children, and a bridge was burned. The IB "support group" stationed in this village, numbering eighteen men, was taken by surprise and disarmed. Six of its members were killed. Fifteen people lost their lives in Korzowa. The highest casualty toll came from Toustobaby (a Polish IB platoon stationed here), where at least seventy two local Poles perished, including sixteen IB soldiers and ten from other villages. The village was first fired upon with incendiary rounds. Taking advantage of the resulting confusion, the UPA men rushed into the houses, murdering the inhabitants. The IB put up a defence, killing two UPA members. As a result "8 bandits were detained – perpetrators of the liquidation of the Polish population, who testified that this [...] pogrom was carried out by bandits armed with axes and knives [who were] locals. Moreover, 74 people lacking papers were detained and are being verified"⁴.

On Christmas Eve of 1944, the UPA attacked the mixed Polish-Ukrainian village of Ihrowica (Ihrovitsia), Ternopil county. The village hosted a permanent IB outpost subordinate to the command in Hhuboczek Wielki. A four-man IB patrol sent from the village encountered an advancing UPA force. In the skirmish, one IB soldier was killed, another was taken prisoner and murdered (his severed head was later found). The two surviving IB soldiers ran for help to Hhuboczek. The UPA men struck Ihrowica just as the inhabitants were sitting down to Christmas Eve supper. They were murdered in their homes with axes and knives. Among the first to be killed was priest Stanisław Szczepankiewicz along with his mother and siblings. A resistance was only put up by the few IB soldiers within the outpost. Despite numerical superiority, the nationalists failed to occupy the building. The populace was alerted by the sound of shots and a bell toll, then fleeing to various hiding places as well as to the homes of friendly Ukrainians. Nevertheless, about eighty Poles were killed.

On the night of December 28, the "Burlaky" sotnia, commanded by Ivan "Chornyi" Semchyshyn, struck Łozowa. The inhabitants of the village felt secure as the village was located right by Ternopil. It was located seven kilometres away as the crow flies, ten by road, and twelve by rail. Additionally, a Red Army subdivision was stationed in the village to guard the railway bridge. The village was inhabited by around eight hundred people, most of whom were Poles. The attack started after 10 PM. UPA men surrounded the village, then, dividing into smaller groups, forced their way into the houses one by one, killing anyone they came across, often with axes. Attempts to resist did occur in some instances. After a few hours, a Soviet unit arrived from Zboriv with relief. At the same time, an armoured train pulled up and started shelling the village,

4 *Polacy i Ukraińcy ...*, p. 1201.

setting some of the buildings aflame. The UPA men began to retreat. A Soviet report assessed the losses as follows: "122 people were murdered/slaughtered, among them 67 women, 11 children aged 8 and under. Eight Ukrainian families were killed, the rest were Poles"⁵.

Twenty-six Poles were murdered in the village of Eleonorówka on the night of January 1, 1945. In Głębocek, on the night of January 12, UPA men killed eighteen Poles and three Ukrainians. On January 26 the UPA attacked the village of Majdan in Kopychyntsi district. All Polish homesteads were burnt. The Poles tried sheltering in the church, but the Banderites forced their way inside. Some people were killed on the spot, others were taken outside and hacked to death with axes near a well. One hundred and eighteen Poles were killed.

On February 2 the UPA's "Chortkivsk" kurin, commanded by Petro "Bystryi" Khamchuk, attacked Chervonohrod (Tluste region), where an IB unit was stationed. The majority of this town's inhabitants were Poles. Poles from neighbouring villages were also sheltering in the town for the night. At the beginning of 1945, there were about one thousand five hundred Poles under the care of about one hundred IB members. The town was attacked by two sotnias, "Siri Vovky" and "Chornomortsi". The whole operation was commanded by Bystryi. The battle began at around 10 PM and lasted all night. UPA fired upon the village and preceded to attack. The Ukrainians, dressed in white camouflage, divided into smaller groups, rushed into individual houses, killed the inhabitants, and set the buildings on fire. The Polish defenders were pushed into the community house and church, where they desperately resisted. Czesław Świdorski recalls the end of the attack: "It began to dawn when the cries "brothers, we are leaving!" were heard"⁶. Forty-nine Poles were killed and twenty-eight were wounded. Part of the village burned to the ground. The Ukrainians lost two men with four wounded.

Bystryi's kurin attacked Barysh in Buchach district on the night of February 5. The town had a population of about seven thousand, two-thirds of which were Poles. They were protected by an IB, which consisted of over a hundred people, about fifty of which had previously belonged to the Home Army. The IB took part in many operations against the UPA across the entire Buchach district and even in neighbouring ones, thus posing a real threat to the Ukrainian partisans. The UPA attacked around 10 PM. The IB put up a fierce resistance and even tried counterattacking. A Polish report stated that the UPA "burned and

⁵ TsDAHOU, c. 1, d. 23, v. 1730, p. 65.

⁶ Cit. per: Henryk Komański, Szczepan Siekierka, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na Polakach w województwie tarnopolskim 1939-1946*, Wrocław 2004, pp. 908-909.



Fig. 50 Czerwonogród/Chervonohrod in Ternopil province, photograph from the interwar period.

murdered house to house”⁷. The local Ukrainian population aided the UPA. The Poles estimated the Ukrainian losses at a few dozen dead and wounded (which is probably an overestimation), while Polish losses amounted to over a hundred dead.

Bystryi’s kurin struck again on the night of February 12. This time the target was the village of Pużniki, from which many young people served in the IB at the district HQ in Koropets. Mainly women and children remained in the village. One Soviet memo reads:

At 4 [AM] the UPA band of Bystryi surrounded the village of Pużniki from the direction of Zalesie village[...] and started setting fire to dwellings and farm buildings. Village inhabitants, escaping the fire, ran out of the burning houses and were immediately shot from a short distance [...]. The UPA band burned down [...] 172 houses and brutally murdered 82 civilians⁸.

Soon after, Bystryi’s men murdered another twenty-three Poles in the nearby village of Niskołazy.

⁷ Lucyna Kulińska, *Dzieje Komitetu Ziemi Wschodnich na tle losów ludności polskiej w latach 1943-1947*, v. 1, Kraków 2003, p. 328.

⁸ *Polacy i Ukraińcy ...*, p. 1223.

These were but only some of the attacks on the Polish population taking place at that time. However, from the spring of 1945 on, attacks on Poles slowly but noticeably receded. Even Delegation organizers, affiliated with the National Party, took notice: "One could say that the murders have stopped, and only sporadic incidents are still noted here and there. If there are victims, it is only in response to unorganized, incompetent on our part retaliations, or only among Polish IB members during raids on the Banderites"⁹.

It is possible that in some places the Polish underground made non-aggression agreements with the UPA against the Soviets. This may have been achieved, for example, in the winter of 1945 in the Stryi district. There are indications that such an "alliance" lasted until 1946 in one case. In February of 1946, in Drohobych region, the NKVD arrested three Poles accused of supporting the OUN-B and UPA. At the same time, the Soviets were on the trail of a Polish partisan group that fired on one of the Soviet garrisons and then distributed leaflets proclaiming "Long live a free Poland! Long live a free Ukraine!". We do not know the results of the investigation, hence it is unknown whether any Polish partisan group was still active at that time, or whether this was a UPA provocation meant to provoke repressions against the Poles. However, if these were indeed Poles, they could have only held out in the field with Ukrainian help.

Although after 1945 the focus of the Polish-Ukrainian conflict had shifted to the lands of present-day Poland, the Polish issue occasionally resurfaced in UPA activities in Ukraine. At a meeting in 1947, the leadership of the Ukrainian underground discussed how to deal with Poles if they tried returning to Eastern Galicia after the outbreak of a third world war. It was decided that in such circumstances the borders of the "Ukrainian ethnographic lands" should be defended. How this was to be done, we can only guess ...

The Nationalists also used the Polish card in their persuasions to continue the fight against the communists. We read: "the Bolsheviks have sliced off many Ukrainian lands [from Ukraine and gave them – G.M.] to the Poles, Belarusians, the most to themselves". It was also announced that the future Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic would reach far beyond the borders of the USSR: "from the Don past the San River", because "the Ukrainian people will not give up a single piece of native land to their greedy, insatiable neighbours"¹⁰. These words were written not in 1939 but 1949.

9 Cit. per: Lucyna Kulińska, *Dzieje Komitetu ...*, p. 270.

10 Літопис УПА, v. 10, Toronto–Lviv 1994, pp. 119, 123.

The anti-Soviet Guerilla in Western Ukraine

By 1944, the Red Army had captured the entire territory of western Ukraine. The Soviets collected food quotas in the occupied territories, recruited local Ukrainians en masse into the Red Army and threw them into the front line after only a few days of training. An administration was quickly set up. Most of the party and state cadres were newcomers from eastern Ukraine, who often behaved as if they were in a conquered country and dealt brutally with the local Ukrainian population. This is evidenced by the many examples of abuse, theft, and rape committed by the Soviets. It is therefore no wonder that support for the underground grew.

At the beginning of 1944, the UPA numbered about twenty five thousand people grouped in over a hundred partisan units. The leadership of the Volhynian underground planned to send some of its sotnias on raids to the east immediately once the front had passed. As soon as the snow melted, the designated units set off. Perhaps they already saw the USSR collapsing in their minds. Reality, however, did not meet their expectations. UPA units set out on expedition on March 10, 1944. Two weeks later, on March 23, it unexpectedly began snowing again, which lasted until mid-April. This made it difficult for the partisans to move so as not to be noticed. Some units were broken up and others simply disbanded. In the round-ups that swept through Volhynia on that occasion, the Soviets also broke up Yarema's "first" UPA sotnia. Yarema, in command of a kurin by that time, was killed.

Although the expedition ended in complete failure, the Ukrainians did not intend to give up the fight. A chance for success was seen in the outbreak of a third world war, hence Britain and the United States were viewed as allies. The will to fight was further strengthened by the widespread fear that Soviet authorities would murder or, at best, deport all the inhabitants of western Ukraine. The leaders of the OUN and UPA were convinced that the communists intended for the Ukrainians to share the fate of the Jews, which was reinforced by the experience of the Great Famine in the 1930s. They thus adopted the view that it was better to die in battle than to allow oneself to be murdered.

Therefore, immediately after the arrival of the Red Army, Ukrainian partisan units began large-scale combat operations aimed at preventing the establishment of local communist authorities. These actions, supported by a large part of the population, clearly demonstrated the desire of Ukrainians to live in an independent state. There were calls to boycott mobilization, conscript convoys

were broken up, communist activists were killed, and smaller units of the Red Army and NKVD were liquidated. On February 29, 1944, the commander of the 1st Ukrainian Front, General Nikolai Vatutin, was wounded in a skirmish with the UPA (he died of his wounds in April). On August 18 the 1st Communication Battalion of the 1331st Rifle Regiment was ambushed on the road in Pidhaitsi region en route to the front. Most of the soldiers and officers were killed, only eleven men survived. Assaults on railroad routes, stations, and bridges multiplied. By the end of 1944, the UPA had killed 142 NKVD officers, 752 NKVD and Red Army Internal Troops soldiers, 901 party organizers, and 2908 civilians in the western regions of Ukraine.

The Soviets launched a decisive counterattack. Garrisons of units as large as battalions were deployed in each region, while the regional capital received a regiment of NKVD Internal Troops. In total, more than thirty thousand NKVD soldiers were thrown against the UPA. Some units came to Ukraine directly from Chechnya and Kalmykia, where they had just finished deporting the population. NKVD-subordinated Destruction Battalions were formed in individual villages. Ten armoured trains, supported by landing groups, were sent to protect the railroads. On February 13, 1944, the first appeal of the USSR authorities was issued, calling on UPA men to voluntarily come forward and lay down their arms. At the same time, large-scale cleansing operations were launched. Persons suspected of supporting the underground were sent deep into the USSR. The bodies of killed partisans were often put on public display to deter others. To the same end, open trials and public executions of captured OUN-B and UPA members were organized, involving even school-children. Undoubtedly, the 1st Secretary of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of Ukraine (KPU), Nikita Khrushchev, personally attached great importance to combating Ukrainian partisans. At a meeting on combating banditry in the Stanyslaviv region, held in October 1945, Khrushchev instructed the gathering:

Retaliatory strikes are not being conducted. This is the strongest measure that influences the citizen and not a single crime committed by bandits should go unpunished. This strong measure is used very meekly. [...] More severe measures should be adopted against the kulak part of the population and if even one is not a kulak but is in contact with bandits, let him be directly responsible for what the bandit has done. The bandits' collaborators should be hit, and the main blow should be inflicted on kulaks and other hostile elements. Perhaps a few should be tried and publicly executed. Previously we conducted open trials and hanged, today the situation has changed and this method cannot be used, but, if the law permits, conduct public executions by shooting. This is imperative because it is a means of intimidating the citizens¹.

1 Cit. per: *Никита Сергеевич Хрущев. Два цвета времени. Документы из личного фонда Н.С. Хрущева в 2-х томах*, ed. Н. Томилина, v. 1, Moscow 2009, pp. 174-175.

NKVD Internal Troops conducted 39,773 counter-insurgency operations from February 1944 to January 1, 1946. They killed 103,313 and captured 110,785 “bandits” in their course. Additionally, they arrested 8370 “active OUN members” and 15,959 “active insurgents”. Most of these victims were civilians, given that Internal Troops operations were accompanied by various crimes. Even from Soviet reports, one can learn that during the operation “there were cases of the extralegal shooting of innocent citizens, marauding, drunkenness, indiscipline of privates and officers, and, what is doubly worse, these crimes were not dealt with decisively”².

The Soviets tried to control all contact between Red Army soldiers and local society. Major M. Pukhov, an officer in the 260th Artillery Brigade, had, to his misfortune, fallen in love with a resident of Nadvirna, daughter of a trader and, according to Soviet documents, an OUN member. When she was arrested, he visited her in prison, brought packages and letters, and even petitioned the NKVD for her release. This enraged the party authorities. Major General Leonid Brezhnev, later First Secretary of the CPSU, assessed the situation as follows:

Major Pukhov has lost not only vigilance and his officer's honour but also forgot about his party and state duties, going down the path [...] of cooperation with bandits. The District War Council [...] issued a political evaluation of [...] Pukhov, depriving him of his officer rank and expelling him from the ranks [...]. Pukhov has been excluded from the party ranks. The District War Council's order was delivered to the entire officer corps for their information³.

Agent activities played an important role in the fight against the Ukrainian underground. In October 1944, approximately six hundred experienced operatives were sent to western Ukraine from other parts of the USSR, whose duties included creating an agent network. On a large scale, the NKVD also organized spec-groups posing as UPA (in June of 1945, there were 157 such groups). Their tasks included liquidating underground leaders and smaller groups of partisans, providing NKVD troops with intelligence, and, through various provocations, sowing an atmosphere of mutual suspicion within the underground.

In the spring of 1945, the OUN leadership addressed the population with a proclamation: “He who consciously works with the NKGB – is a dog. For dogs – a dog's death, contempt of the whole nation, and disgrace for eternity”. Succumbing to the mania of suspicion, the OUN Security Service liquidated almost 900 OUN members in Volhynia in 1945 on charges of treason! It was not uncommon for reprisals to extend to the entire family of a real or suspected

2 Russian State War Archive (RGVA), c. 38675, d. 1, v. 12, p. 130.

3 TsDAHOU, c. 1, d. 23, v. 2958, pp. 16-20.

agent. In Volhynia, Klym Savur ordered to “quintate” villages particularly hostile to nationalists, that is, kill every fifth inhabitant.

In the winter of 1945/1946, precisely before elections to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR scheduled for February 10, 1946, the communists decided to deal a death blow to the UPA. The “Great Blockade” was organized. After January 10, 1946, all of western Ukraine was coated with Red Army and NKVD garrisons. Three and a half thousand of them were created, each housing twenty to one hundred soldiers and officers, well-armed with machine guns. Additionally, numerous pursuit squads were set up, with armoured personnel carriers at their disposal and carrying out constant manhunts. The “Great Blockade” lasted until April 1. As a result, partisan dead alone numbered five thousand.

The losses suffered during the “Great Blockade” were irrecoverable and caused the Ukrainian underground to finally disband the UPA sotnias. In July 1946, UPA commander General Shukhevych ordered the reorganization of partisan units. Further struggle was to be carried out only by OUN militias deep in the network. Demobilization of UPA units was conducted gradually. In 1949, there were still two UPA sotnias operating in Galicia (each in the strength of a chota, i.e. platoon), which were disbanded by the end of the year. One of them had conducted a propaganda raid earlier in Romania. As mentioned before, groups numbering several conspirators continued to be active. The fight against them turned more and more into a game of paperchase. When maneuvering, partisans pretended to be local farmers, taking with them various farm tools: axes, saws, or fishing rods. They would pour kerosene on their tracks, sprinkle them with snuff or pepper, march along river and stream beds, or use roads with heavy traffic – all to confuse any pursuit with hounds. The activity of the underground decreased, but this did not mean it did not carry out occasionally even astonishing operations. One daring operation was organized on July 10, 1951, in Nadvirna. Around 11 PM four partisans burst into a local hospital, killed two Soviets guarding a wounded OUN organizer, took the woman and fled.

The Soviets meticulously studied the tactics used by the UPA and adjusted their pursuit practices to them. At the same time, they intensified repressions. One of the most effective methods of fighting the underground was to deport families of partisans or people suspected of sympathizing with the underground deep into the USSR. The first deportations were carried out between 1944 and 1945. Successes against the underground led the Soviets to temporarily abandon this measure in 1946. In 1947, however, the Soviets decided to launch a large-scale deportation operation across western Ukraine. In addition to “bandit” sympathizers, kulaks were to be expelled concurrently as a prelude to the forced collectivization of the region in 1948-1950. The Soviets began the

expulsion operation, code-named "West", on October 21 1947 at 6 AM and in most districts finished it the same day. In the Ternopil region over thirteen thousand people were displaced within ten hours! Within several days, 26,644 families of "active nationalists" were uprooted – 76,192 people, including 18,866 men, 35,152 women, 22,174 children.

In western Ukraine, only eight hundred and seventeen people were deported in 1948, but by 1949 it was decided to return to mass deportation tactics, introducing a new method for selecting deportees. From then on, deportations were carried out in response to guerrilla actions, encompassing individuals living close to the place of the event. Soviet reports read, for example: "On March 15 [1949 – G.M.] in the village of Malchytsi (Ivano-Frankivsk region) a local citizen – Pavlov – was killed. In response to one band's appearance, three families of 14 people were displaced"⁴. In retaliation for the disarming of an auxiliary militia unit on September 12, 1950 (partisans captured ten rifles and an automatic machine gun), twenty one families with a total of eighty two people were deported from the village of Selisko. The Soviet actions of this period resemble Nazi methods of collective responsibility, except that the Germans shot hostages and pacified villages while the Soviets sent those suspected of being "bandits" deep into the USSR. In 1949, the Soviets deported 25,527 people from western Ukraine, as many as 41,149 in 1950, 18,523 in 1951, and 3,229 in 1952.

The repressions caused support for the underground to plummet. One captured partisan testified: "When we come up to the houses, the inhabitants declare directly: 'Go away, otherwise we will end up in Siberia because of You'"⁵. By the late 1940s, the anti-communist underground in Ukraine found itself in a critical situation.

The Soviets attached the greatest importance to the capture or liquidation of the OUN-B and UPA leadership. On January 26, 1945, the NKVD managed to take captive one of the higher-echelon commanders of the Ukrainian underground in Volhynia: Yuri "Rudyi" Stelmashchuk. Before he was sentenced to death and executed, he revealed the whereabouts of Volhynian UPA commander Dmytro "Klym Savur" Kliachkivskiyi. After a three-day manhunt in the area of Orzhiv hamlet, the Soviets came upon the tracks of three partisans, who were liquidated after a short chase. As it turned out, this was Klym Savur with his bodyguard. According to Dmytro Vedeneyev and Hennadiy Bystruchin, "it became a sad symbol of the fratricidal armed conflict in western Ukraine that

4 TsDAHOU, c. 1, d. 23, f. 5944, pp. 12, 27.

5 RGVA, c. 38 724, d. 1, f. 34, p. 120.

the founder of the UPA, a Galician, was killed by a Ukrainian from the Donetsk region”⁶.

Vasyl “Shelest” Sydor, commander of the Galician UPA, was captured and killed by a Soviet task force in the Gorgany mountains in 1949. A year later, on March 5, the Soviets managed to find the hideout of UPA commander Taras Chuprynka in Bilohoroshcha near Lviv. Surrounded, Shukhevych put up a fight, killing a major of the Ministry of State Security (MGB). Heavily wounded, he shot himself with a pistol. Shukhevych’s body was transported to Lviv and then buried in an undisclosed location.

It was not until the turn of 1951 that the MGB got to Ivan “Dubovyi” Lytvynchuk, the initiator of the first anti-Polish operations (including those in Parośla). Surrounded in a bunker, he blew himself up.

After Shukhevych’s death, Colonel Vasyl “Lemish” Kuk took command of the underground. He was arrested together with his wife on May 24, 1954. This marked the end of the existence of the Ukrainian underground as an organized structure. However, the search continued for individual groups and people trying to survive in the extremely unfavourable situation. Gradually, they were caught or taken out by the KGB. The last such active OUN group consisting of three people was destroyed by the KGB in 1960 in Ternopil region.

The Soviets also killed Stepan Bandera. After his release from a German concentration camp in 1944, he led the Banderite movement in exile. While some members of the OUN, initially for purely opportunistic reasons, matured during the war and accepted democratic values, Bandera remained an integral nationalist to the end. Although he kept sending couriers to Ukraine, he was in practice completely deprived of any influence on the underground’s struggle, becoming more and more its icon. This myth-making process was completed by a KGB agent, who killed Bandera in 1959 in Munich. His death came at a time when his influence in exile was waning. Since then, his idealized image, far-flung from reality, has become the symbol of an unbreakable will to fight for independence for many western Ukrainians.

According to official data compiled during the Soviet era, the OUN-B and UPA underground carried out 14,424 armed operations in 1944-1951. As a result, the Soviets lost 30,676 killed, including 8340 employees of internal affairs organs, soldiers of internal, border and Red Army troops, and members of the IBs. More than 15,000 of those killed were civilians – residents of villages and kolkhozes. In turn, as a result of the repressions carried out by the Soviets

6 Дмитро Веденєєв, Геннадій Биструхін, *“Повстанська розвідка діє точно й відважно...”*. Документальна спадщина підрозділів спеціального призначення ОУН та УПА 1940-1950-ті роки, Kyiv 2006, p. 99.

to fight the UPA, between 445,000 and 500,000 inhabitants of the western regions of Ukraine were killed, arrested, or deported. The number of dead alone was 155,108 and the number of deported amounted to 203,662. Soviet repressions against the underground encompassed close to every tenth inhabitant of western Ukraine.

It is untrue that the UPA killed about eighty thousand Ukrainians alone, and this is evident from the Soviet figures quoted. Though the often cruel killings of entire Ukrainian families accused of supporting the authorities cannot be justified, we should remember that not only the UPA but also, for example, Lithuanian partisans applied the principle of collective responsibility. The liquidation of alleged and actual traitors from among their own ranks is a characteristic feature of all partisan movements. Such individuals are always the easiest target for attacks and therefore usually account for a high percentage of those killed. Actions of this type are therefore a shameful part of history, but not exceptional.

The claim that nationalists were an isolated social group is also a myth. The Ukrainian underground accounted for 1-2 percent of the population of western Ukraine. The same percentage of those involved in the resistance movement can be found in Lithuania and many other countries. This shows that the UPA's struggle against the communists, especially in the postwar period, enjoyed enormous popular support in Volhynia and Eastern Galicia. Without this, the underground would not have been able to exist under Soviet conditions for so long.

According to prominent Ukrainian historian Yaroslav Hrytsak:

The years 1944-1948 are the hardest of the 20th century for Ukrainians in Galicia, a time of the greatest terror and struggle, with the greatest number of casualties, especially among civilians. [...] Galicia was for the Soviet Union at the time what Chechnya became after its collapse for Russia⁷.

7 *Ukraina. Przewodnik Krytyki Politycznej*. Z Jarosławem Hrycakiem rozmawia Iza Chruślińska, Gdańsk-Warsaw 2009, pp. 148-149. I discuss in detail the UPA's post-war battles against the Soviets in: *Ukraińska Partyzantka 1942-1960*, Warsaw 2006.

From the Retaliation in Pawłokoma to the Win-UPA Attack on Hrubieszów

24.1 “Ukrainians Beyond the Zbruch!”

The passing of the front and the creation of the Polish Committee of National Liberation (PKWN) “froze” the Polish-Ukrainian conflict in the lands of present-day Poland. Both Lublin and Rzeszów provinces constituted the direct rear of the front, hence their unusual saturation with Red Army units. In this situation, the partisans and underground had more than limited options, especially given that constant NKVD manhunts were being conducted in the area. Despite this, many Polish partisan units survived this first period of Soviet repression without major losses. Not infrequently, Home Army soldiers also managed to man the emerging militia stations with their own people. In Rzeszów region, in the strip between Sanok and Lubaczów, the grouping “Warta”, commanded by lieutenant colonel Franciszek “Topór” Rekucki, managed to make a foothold clandestinely after transferring from near Lviv. It consisted of one thousand six hundred men and was composed of four battalions: “A”, “B”, “C”, and “D”. In Lubaczów district, battalion “B” took over all the police stations. The Polish underground still hoped that after the end of the war the Soviets would be forced by the Allies to give Lviv back to Poland. In such a situation, should the Ukrainians try to take over the city, the “Warta” grouping was to immediately rush to the rescue supported by the Home Army from Lublin and Rzeszów.

When the front arrived, most UPA units started raiding eastwards, to Eastern Galicia and Volhynia, to avoid the Soviet manhunts conducted just behind the front line. Only after a few months did some UPA sotnias return to the territory of today’s Poland. However, they still had to reckon with NKVD round-ups. The Soviets inflicted heavy losses on the UPA in Poland in late 1944 and early 1945. In October 1944, they decimated the “Khoma” sotnia in the Przemyśl Foothills. Soon after they smashed Yurchenko’s Kholm kurin and with the aid of captured intel arrested several hundred members and sympathizers of the OUN in Lublin region. In March 1945, NKVD troops broke up Danylo “Veselyi” Svistel’s sotnia in the village of Strubowiska in the Bieszczady Mountains; in Mrzygłody they annihilated two chotas from Zalizniak’s sotnia. These actions

weakened the Ukrainian underground. In many regions, only weak local OUN and self-defence militias were able to operate.

The Ukrainian underground in Poland, in a top-secret instruction issued on October 18, 1944, recommended:

Spread the word among the Poles that if someone occupies a Ukrainian farmstead, they will be physically liquidated. Those who do not comply are to be physically liquidated, including women and children. Among the Ukrainian population, agitate against deportation [...]. The slogan for today: "Not a single Ukrainian man or woman will leave their forefathers' land!"¹.

The killings of individual Polish families returning to their farms at the end of 1944 and beginning of 1945 in the Rzeszów and Lublin regions should be linked to this order. Considering the weakness of Ukrainian forces, this was playing with fire.

In January 1945, another Soviet offensive was launched. Red Army troops began moving west, allowing the underground to resume its activities. This was accompanied by the expectation of a thaw that was to occur after the fall of Germany, something already obvious to everyone. The possibility of the outbreak of a third world war was also widely anticipated. In the spring of 1945, Polish partisan units took up armed operations. Much of their activity in the new borderlands was directed against Ukrainians, and their actions went far beyond "ordinary" retaliation. Various Polish armed formations most likely decided to introduce the UPA's methods of ethnic cleansing. The wave of brutal attacks on the Ukrainian population between February and April 1945 in the area from Lubaczów to Sanok should be associated with this.

During these operations, entire villages were often razed and exterminated, with Ukrainians returning from forced labour in Germany being ruthlessly killed. These murders were committed by units of both the post-Home Army and national undergrounds, BCh, and formations subordinate to the Polish government in Lublin. Many murders were also the work of marauder bands. There is no doubt these crimes were committed by Poles – Polish, Ukrainian and Soviet documents speak on the issue independently of each other. Although some actions were clearly direct reprisals, the only justification for the majority of them seems to have been a desire to force Ukrainians to flee from the territory of new Poland, perhaps even as far as beyond the Zbruch River.

Probably the most famous events took place in Pawłokoma. In January 1945, nine Poles were abducted from the village and murdered. Some researchers

1 GARF, c. 9478, d. 1, v. 292, p. 317.

doubt that Ukrainians were behind this, pointing to the absence of UPA units in the area. However, the murder of several people could have easily been carried out by a single OUN militia, and one such was indeed stationed in Pawłokoma itself. The Polish underground demanded that the kidnapped be released (or at least that their bodies be handed over), threatening otherwise with retaliation. This demand was not fulfilled however, and on March 5, 1945 a unit of post-Home Army partisans under Józef "Wacław" Biss supported by local self-defence forces fell upon the village. The men were executed at the cemetery, a portion of the women and children were forced to flee, ordered to go "beyond the Zbrucz", while the others were murdered in their homes. According to the available list of victims' names, probably more than three hundred people died there. A group of Ukrainians was also killed in nearby Dynów. In 2006, ceremonies took place in Pawłokoma with the participation of the presidents of Poland and Ukraine.

This was just the beginning of the killings. On March 5 in Olszany, twelve Ukrainians were executed and their bodies thrown into a pool of water, the action deemed a "consecration". On March 6, twenty-three or, according to other sources, as many as eighty Ukrainians were killed in Łubne. The bodies of the murdered were thrown into a well. On March 15, during an attack on Ruszelczyce, thirteen people were killed (including six children). On March 27 in Skopowo about sixty Ukrainians and one Pole were murdered. On April 11, a simultaneous massacre was carried out in the villages of Berezka and Bachów. "The following day," recalled OUN member Ivan Krivutskyi, "on April 12, I was compiling a list of victims at the scene of the crime. In Berezka I recorded 187 people and in Bakhiv 95. Among them were six infants, one of the babies killed was six days old"². On the same day, twenty eight Ukrainians were murdered in Maćkowice and about fifteen in Sufczyn. A few days later, on April 15, twenty seven Ukrainians were killed in Wola Krzywiecka, while in Maćkowice a post-BCh unit massacred as many as one hundred and sixteen people. Stefan Dąmbowski, a Home Army soldier, described Polish activities in that region as follows:

Our operations were similar in quality to those of the Ukrainians. There was no mercy, no pardon in these actions. I could not complain about my comrades-in-arms either. Particularly "Twardy", who had a personal grudge against the Ukrainians, was outdoing himself [...] he would throw himself on the petrified Ukrainians and cut them to pieces. He ripped open their stomachs or cut their throats with incredible skill [...]. Incredibly strong, he often used an ordinary

2 Ivan Krivutskyi, Account in the author's possession.

house-bench instead of a knife, with which he would shatter skulls as if they were poppy seeds³.

The government's 2nd Independent Operational Battalion of the Internal Troops wreaked havoc in the Lubaczów district. In February 1945, its soldiers murdered between thirty and sixty people in Kobylnica Ruska. More Ukrainian civilians perished at their hands in March, the greatest number in Lubliniec and Gorajec, where the number of victims exceeded one hundred.

Many murders were committed by Józef "Wołyniak" Zadziński's national underground unit. In Piskorowice alone it murdered over one hundred and twenty, according to other data as many as three hundred, Ukrainians on April 18, 1945. This is how Maria Ożga, a resident of Piskorowice, described it:

In the early morning, the village and school were surrounded. According to witnesses, four masked men entered the school and executed the people inside. According to the census [...], 180 people perished. Probably a few survived (Szykula, a young boy, hid under the ceiling, one girl, Sroka, survived under the heaps of dead). Also, those who fled were killed. Many people perished by the San River. That is where hunts for the survivors took place. Some were executed inside the village against the buildings. The Ukrainians who had found themselves in Piskorowice were to leave the next day⁴.

Earlier, in February 1945, Wołyniak's unit had slaughtered Jews and Ukrainians it encountered in Leżajsk. As late as 1946 the unit murdered about fifty Ukrainian civilians in Dobra and Dobcza.

In total, 2-3 thousand Ukrainian civilians were murdered in these and other assaults between February and April 1945. One of the Polish partisans, Tadeusz "Sprytny" Bielec, evaluating the actions of that time, stated simply: "We were driving the Ukrainians away into Ukraine"⁵.

24.2 Agreements in Siedliska and Ruda Różaniecka Region

The Ukrainian underground was, admittedly, too weak to stop the wave of attacks, but strong enough to carry out a bloody counterattack. As part of their counter-offensive, Ukrainian self-defence units under the command of Stepan "Khrin" Stebelskyi destroyed Borownica in the Przemyśl Foothills

3 Stefan Dąbbski, *Egzekutor*, Warsaw 2010, p. 81.

4 Cit. per: Dionizy Garbacz, "Wołyniak", *legenda prawdziwa*, Stalowa Wola 2008, pp. 78-80.

5 Cit. per: Tomasz Balbus, *O Polskę Wolną i Niezawistą (1945-1948). WiN w południowo-zachodniej Polsce (geneza – struktury – działalność – likwidacja – represje)*, Kraków–Wrocław 2004, p. 210.



Fig. 51
Ivan "Zalizniak" Shpontak.

(sixty-six Poles were killed), while two UPA sotnias under Zalizniak destroyed Wiązownica near Jarosław (about one hundred casualties).

Zalizniak's kurin was at that time the strongest UPA unit in Poland. On the night of March 27, it carried out a concentrated attack on militia outposts, liquidating 18 of them in total. The Polish villages of Grobla, Mołodycz, Wola Mołodycka, Stare Sioło were also razed at the time; in the last village, 17 Poles were killed. The liquidation of the militia posts possibly stemmed from a desire to "cleanse" the area of the Polish administration in anticipation of the peace conference or the outbreak of another world war. For this reason, as stated in a UPA report, the "Vovky" unit operating in Lublin region "crushed an IB outpost in Machnówka village, Belz district, on March 11, 1945, which had been created there by the Bolshevik border guards to persecute the Ukrainian population. The operation was carried out with great mastery – 74 Bolsheviks were destroyed within a few hours. No casualties of our own"⁶. This short report does not mention that those murdered in Machnówka were Ukrainians sympathetic to the communist movement. What we are dealing with here is a punitive operation against a village whose inhabitants dared to have a different worldview than that of the OUN-B. A few days later UPA men tricked and disarmed several dozen militiamen from Kryłów (including the legendary BCh commander Stanisław "Ryś" Basaj). All the captives were murdered. As late as May 1945 the "Vovky" sotnia carried out a liquidation operation on Poles in Radków, Łachowce, Rzeplin, and Posadów, killing sixty people.

6 Літопис УПА. Нова серія, в. 8, Kyiv–Toronto 2006, p. 767.

The defeat of the Third Reich and Soviet repression of any pro-independence movement finally led both sides to consider winding down the conflict. The Soviets were the main enemy for both the Poles and the Ukrainians, so halting the two-front war seemed beneficial to both sides. In late April and early May 1945, the Polish and Ukrainian underground signed several local cease-fire agreements. In the Rzeszów region, the most significant was undoubtedly the agreement between the post-Home Army underground and OUN-B/UPA concluded on April 29 in Siedliska. The Polish side was represented by Home Army officer Captain Dragan "Draža" Sotirović (of Serbian descent), associated with the "Warta" grouping, while the Ukrainians were represented by Ivan Kryvutskyi. At the meeting, it was decided to cease all offensive operations against the other side and begin exchanging intel on the communists. Most importantly, the safety of the civilian population was guaranteed and rules for future relations were established. "From that day on," writes I. Kryvutskyi, "for several months south of Przemyśl [...] there was peace"⁷. The agreement in this region lasted, evidently, a few months, but it fulfilled its basic task: it stopped the wave of massacres. After the Potsdam Conference, the existence of the "Warta" grouping lost all sense (it became clear that Lviv would not return to Poland), and it was disbanded. However, the launch of forced deportations of Ukrainians and new UPA attacks on Poles caused the Polish underground in Rzeszów to break the agreement.

An agreement concluded near Ruda Różaniecka in the Lublin region was to prove much more durable. A fervent advocate of talks with Ukrainians in this region was the head of the Home Army Zamość Inspectorate, Captain Marian "Irka" Gołębiewski, a Cichociemny (Polish clandestine paratrooper), possessing extreme merit in defending the Polish population from the Germans and UPA in the years 1943-1944. Years later he recalled:

In September 1944, I convened a briefing with twenty three Home Army commanders from the Chełm, Zamość, and Hrubieszów lands. I outlined the historical background and current political situation and demanded that, instead of fighting the Ukrainians, we should seek agreement and cooperation with them. There was a stir among the attendees, as there were many who had lost their entire families in the fighting against the Ukrainians. No one objected [...] I had truly convinced them. They began comprehending my idea with understanding, I would even say: with enthusiasm⁸.

7 Ivan Krivutskyi, *Relacja ...*

8 O współdziałaniu WiN i UPA. Z Marianem Gołębiewskim rozmawia Andrzej Romanowski, "Tygodnik Powszechny" 1990, no 34.



Fig. 52
 Captain Marian "Irka" Gołębiewski,
 "Silent Unseen" (Cichociemni) member,
 head of the Home Army's Zamość
 Inspectorate, headed the Polish
 delegation in talks with the Ukrainians at
 Ruda Różaniecka.

At the start of 1945, Yevhen "Prirva" Shtender and Yuriy "Sheik" Lopatynskyi arrived in the Lublin region with instructions to strike an agreement with the Poles. The former was soon to take over OUN leadership in the Lublin region, while the latter was an emissary of the OUN Central Provid. It was he who represented the Ukrainian underground on May 21, 1945 in talks conducted at a hamlet located between Ruda Różaniecka and Lubliniec Nowy. The Polish delegation was headed by Marian Gołębiewski and his deputy, Stanisław "Wyrwa" Książek. During the negotiations, both sides undertook to hold a ceasefire, avoid unnecessary bloodshed, and cooperate in the fight against the NKVD and Department of Security. Mutual operational regions were established. To avoid suspicions of murdering innocent people, the judgement of Poles in regions controlled by the UPA required the consent of the Polish underground. Passing death sentences on Ukrainians in the "post-Home Army" areas was to be possible only after consultation with the UPA. The Ukrainians assured that they had issued orders to stop the anti-Polish purges in Eastern Galicia and suggested concluding a national non-aggression treaty or even an anti-Soviet alliance. However, the Polish emissaries could not make such arrangements without authorization from higher up, so this issue was left unresolved for further negotiation. A member of the Ukrainian delegation, Sergey "Hrab" Martyniuk, later recalled:

After the agreement was signed, word got around that the Poles and Ukrainians had reconciled and would strike the secret police together. [...] The populace welcomed our decision with relief, but without enthusiasm. From then on, whenever we entered a Polish village, at least they were not afraid of us shooting them⁹.



Fig. 53 OUN-B, UPA, and Home Army-DSZ delegation deliberations near Ruda Różaniecka, May 21, 1945.

24.3 Wierchowiny and Hrubieszów

Polish nationalist circles reacted to the Polish-Ukrainian agreement with reluctance. The partisan groups subordinate to them did not accept the ceasefire, and in the Lublin region local National Armed Forces (NSZ) units, upon hearing of it, decided to carry out an anti-Ukrainian raid.

At the turn of 1944, NSZ units killed a total of about fifty Ukrainians in various operations across the Lublin region. Among the victims were many Polish Workers' Party (PPR) sympathizers, and even Security Office (UB) and NKVD collaborators (or at least suspected collaborators), therefore these actions may be explained by the will to fight against the communists. In May 1945 the NSZ concentrated their partisan detachments into a couple-hundred-strong grouping, headed by Major Mieczysław "Szary" Pazderski. The nationalists decided

⁹ Account of S. Martyniuk "Hraba" in the author's collection.

to make a raid through Krasnystaw, Tomaszów Lubelski, and Hrubieszów districts. Regardless of any actions against communists, they also aimed to pacify Ukrainian villages, possibly to break the agreement between the post-Home Army underground and the UPA.

On June 6 NSZ partisans entered the Ukrainian village of Wierzchowiny (Vezhkhoviny), which was considered to be behind the communists, and massacred its inhabitants. In Pazderski's report we read:

Along the way, it was decided to liquidate several Ukrainian villages. The first and closest was the village of Wierzchowiny [...]. Wierzchowiny was surrounded from all sides and 194 Ukrainians were eliminated. A dozen or so managed to escape¹⁰.

NSZ soldier Marian "Doniec" Lipczak later testified: "usually we shot, having no choice, from the smallest children to the elderly, that was Szary's order"¹¹. Stanisław Nieworaj recalled a meeting between his wife and one of the attackers:

In Szary's [...] unit there were 2 boys, 15 years old at the most [...]. One of them [...] came to [...] my wife and asked her to give him something to eat because he was hungry. But first, he wanted to boast [...] what a hero he had been in Wierzchowiny. This is what he says to my wife: "I'm telling you Ma'am, these two old men were begging so hard not to be killed, but I did them with a spade", then my wife got angry and said to him: "Oh you thug! Get out of here! You won't get any food". He became ashamed and left¹².

Years later there were attempts to shift responsibility for the murder in Wierzchowiny from NSZ to UB officers pretending to be partisans. In light of the documents quoted above, it must be firmly stated that these "theories" have the same scientific value as the claims that in Volhynia Poles were not killed by the UPA but by disguised Soviet partisans.

On June 10, 1945, the NSZ grouping was detected by a pursuit group of the 98th Regiment of the NKVD Internal Troops in the village of Huta and completely smashed. According to some sources, up to two hundred partisans may have been killed.

10 Cit. per: Mariusz Zajączkowski, *Spór o Wierzchowiny. Działalność oddziałów Akcji Specjalnej (Pogotowia Akcji Specjalnej) NSZ w powiatach Chełm, Hrubieszów, Krasnystaw i Lubartów na tle konfliktu polsko-ukraińskiego (sierpień 1944 roku–czerwiec 1945 roku)*, in: "Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość. Pismo Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej" 2006, no 1, p. 283.

11 *Ibidem*, p. 287.

12 *Ibidem*.



Fig. 54 Victims of the pacification in Wierzchowiny conducted by NSZ units, June 6, 1945.

It would not be out of place to recall that in the postwar program of the national underground one of the most important points was to get rid of national minorities. The greatest threat was seen in the German, Ukrainian, and Jewish minorities, which is why their expulsion from the country was aimed at. In issue 23 from June 23, 1945 of the NSZ's press Organ "Szczerebiec" they wrote:

The struggle [...] is uncompromising and requires each individual to clearly declare his impulse to be a Pole or a non-Pole. Wasser Poles cannot exist and shall not. The old methods of political appeasement and coddling of Jews, Germans, or Ukrainians have proven disastrous for us in consequence. Appeasement is an exponent of weakness and emboldens the mildly treated (minority)¹³.

In this context, the actions of certain groups of the national underground against such Ukrainian villages as Wierzchowiny or Piskorowice appear not as isolated excesses of recalcitrant commanders, but as a consistent implementation of the National Democracy political program.

At the time when the nationalists were setting out on their raid on Wierzchowiny, the agreements between the Home Army-Freedom and Independence (AK-WiN) and UPA began showing their first effects. The calming of the situation allowed many Poles to return to homes abandoned in 1944. Unexpectedly, a Polish-Ukrainian black market flourished as well:

13 *Ibidem*, pp. 282-283.

UPA members sold building materials and grain abandoned by displaced Ukrainians to the AK-WiN network. As a result of such transactions, the Ukrainian underground received at least 2.5 million zlotys (for comparison: at the turn of 1945 the price of a horse was around 20,000 zlotys). In the autumn of 1945, the ceasefire was extended to Podlachia.

However, the WiN Headquarters distanced themselves from the agreements made in Lublin District. It was feared, not without reason, that the UPA was thinking of further trimming Poland's borders, and therefore demanded that the starting point of talks be the assumption: "You are in Poland, not your own home". There was also serious thought put towards breaking the agreement and recalling Gołębiewski. Any final decisions were thwarted by the arrest of the heads of WiN's First Command. Marian Gołębiewski also fell into the hands of the UB (he was sentenced to death, later downgraded to imprisonment; he regained his freedom in 1956).

The deflation of Polish-Ukrainian animosity in the Lublin region was so favourable to both sides that in early 1946 the Poles proposed that the Ukrainians join in military operations against the communists. The primary interest was in a joint attack on Hrubieszów. The dumbstruck Ukrainians, with some hesitation, agreed. The first joint action took place on April 6, 1946, when a UPA unit captured Werbkowice railroad station with the help of the Poles, from where transports with people displaced to Ukraine were departing.

Shortly after, on the night of May 27, the combined WiN and UPA forces (about four hundred men in total) struck Hrubieszów. Using machine gun fire and so-called torpedoes (German rocket mortar shells fired from primitive launchers) the UPA units pinned the NKVD troops stationed in the town and unsuccessfully tried capturing the Resettlement Commission building. At the same time, WiN assault groups captured the UB office, freeing twenty arrested people (including five Ukrainians), demolished the PPR and alderman buildings, and executed two PPR organizers. By morning the partisans began their retreat. The 5th Infantry Regiment of the Polish Army did not join the fight, probably thanks to the efforts of WiN intelligence. The Polish Army limited itself to sending one platoon to the city to scout the situation. It is worth mentioning that Lieutenant Wojciech Jaruzelski (Poland's later First Secretary) took part in this reconnaissance action.

The attack on Hrubieszów caused panic among the local power apparatus. Local garrisons declared a state of siege not only in Hrubieszów but also Tomaszów Lubelski, limiting field patrols to a minimum. The number and quality of reports from the frightened agents also dropped dramatically.

At the beginning of August 1946, "Sunday Times" correspondent William Derek Selby visited Hrubieszów district. Through his secretary and translator

Janusz Kazimierczak, he established contact with the WiN, thanks to which he conducted talks with local commanders, among them Józef “Azja” Dąbrowski and Stefan “Wiktor” Kwaśniewski. He also visited the partisan units of Henryk “Młot” Lewczuk and Czesław “Ślepy” Hajduk. The partisans also took Selby to a meeting with a four-person delegation from the Ukrainian underground. The journalist’s escapade resulted in articles for the “Sunday Times”, after which the communist authorities ordered him to leave Poland. This meeting that included the English journalist was one of the last examples of cooperation between the Polish and Ukrainian underground. In the following months, cooperation began to slowly pitter out. However, loose contacts between the undergrounds were maintained up to Operation Vistula.

In the 1950s, the Ukrainian participants of these agreements, by this time in exile, presented them as a moment of demarcation of a new Polish-Ukrainian state border. According to them, the Home Army-WiN agreed to hand over a significant part of the Chełm land to Ukraine. This was obviously deliberate disinformation. WiN soldiers not only did not intend to cede so much as a fragment of the Lublin region but also seriously considered retaking Lviv. Marian Gołębiewski himself considered possible a Polish-Ukrainian federation and the agreements he initiated were meant to be the first step in that direction. At the same time, the Poles did not rule out the possibility that they would one day have to face the Ukrainians again and did not hide these considerations from UPA members. Undoubtedly, the agreements concluded were accompanied by a large dose of mutual suspicion and occasionally even pent-up aversion.

Today, the memory of the Polish-Ukrainian agreements is often brushed aside. The joint attack on Hrubieszów does not fit the black-and-white narrative in which the Polish-Ukrainian conflict is most often described: the members of the UPA can only be cruel murderers, the Poles their helpless victims. In this context, the alliance with the UPA may seem like a freak one-off, something incomprehensible and motivated solely by bad intentions. Meanwhile, both Polish and Ukrainian partisans were thinking of one and the same: how to best serve the freedom of their homelands. The agreements had a local, immediate goal – limiting bloodshed – and to a limited extent, this goal was achieved. Therefore, they should be considered a success. “One enemy was chosen instead of two” – a WiN partisan would say years later, expressing well with this blunt statement the thoughts of the soldiers at that time.

The case of Wierzychowiny may be pointed out to all the critics of the agreements that the post-Home Army partisans made with the UPA. Would it truly have been better if the WiN had gone down the same path taken by the NSZ units? After all, the black stain on the pages of Polish history is the pacification of Wierzychowiny, not the attack on Hrubieszów.

“Repatriation” in Soviet Style

25.1 The Displacement of Poles

Soviet frontline victories meant that Joseph Stalin would decide the fate of Central and Eastern Europe, and thus of Poland as well. The restoration of the 1941 border was one of the war aims of the USSR's leader and therefore the Polish demand that at least Lviv should remain with Poland had no chance of being fulfilled. Already in autumn of 1943 at the Tehran Conference, Stalin agreed with Churchill and Roosevelt that the eastern borders of Poland would be based on the Curzon Line, in return for which Poland would receive territorial compensation in the west. Immediately after this conference, the British began putting pressure on the Polish government, trying to force it to accept the border changes. On February 22, 1944, Churchill disclosed to the House of Commons, without revealing details, that the Polish question was discussed at the Tehran Conference. The consensus there, he said, was that a “unified and independent Poland” was necessary; at the same time he made it clear that Great Britain had never guaranteed “any definitive Polish border”¹. This was a clear signal that decisions regarding Poland's loss of the Kresy had already been made. That is how it was received by Poles at home and abroad either way.

Meanwhile, in Moscow, Nikita Khrushchev, as First Secretary of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of Ukraine (KPU), officially addressed the Supreme Soviet of the USSR with a demand to include Hrubieszów, Tomaszów, Chełm, Zamość, and Jarosław districts into the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. Unofficially, however, the Ukrainian communists also claimed Przemyśl and Krynica. The territorial claims of the KPU against Poland were to be substantiated by the “voluntary” signatures of inhabitants signed under petitions requesting incorporation into the USSR, which were collected in these areas immediately after the Red Army entered.

Stalin had already agreed in Tehran that the whole of the Lublin region would remain within the Polish borders and had no intention of changing these arrangements. Khrushchev's initiative, however, allowed Stalin to appear before the Allies as a proponent of moderate solutions, even as an arbiter in Polish-Ukrainian disputes. It is doubtful the Ukrainian communists realized

1 Jan Karski, *Wielkie mocarstwa wobec Polski 1919-1945*, Warsaw 1992, p. 417.

their demands had been treated instrumentally, which is probably why they were surprised by the decision on the shape of the USSR's new borders. In his memoirs, Khrushchev wrote:

Take for example the city of Kholm [...] it was part of Ukraine. Now, along with other areas, Kholm was to become part of Poland [...]. I didn't know about Stalin's decision until he notified the Polish leadership. He put me [...] in a very awkward position. Those representatives of the Ukrainian intelligentsia who supported the party were dissatisfied and angry over the course of events².

Stalin decided to conduct radical population transfers to consolidate the new eastern Polish border (an issue not yet formally solved then and one that could resurface, at least theoretically). The removal of Poles from the USSR, from this perspective, seemed to conclusively eliminate any possible attempts to return to the border issue. So, one of the first accords signed by the PKWN was the agreement of September 9, 1944, with the Ukrainian SSR on the mutual evacuation of citizens. According to this agreement, the Polish population was to leave the territory of Western Ukraine, while the Ukrainian population was to leave "the people's" Poland. The so-called repatriation was supposed to be voluntary. Both sides were to be supervised by plenipotentiaries for resettlement.

The USSR leadership, headed by Khrushchev, was determined to get Poles and Jews deported as quickly as possible. However, Soviet calls were met with obstruction by the Polish inhabitants of the Kresy in the fall of 1944. It was generally believed that the war with Germany would quickly turn into a clash between Britain and the USA against the Soviet Union, with Poland taking the side of the Allies and regaining the border on the Zbruch River in the east. Further hindering the resettlement was the approaching winter and people's awareness that, having abandoned all life-long possessions, they were departing for the unknown, for lands destroyed by war and "liberated" only up to the Vistula River. The efficiency of the PKWN resettlement apparatus was also mistrusted. Reality was to demonstrate that these were not unfounded fears. The displaced from Lviv, who were brought to Przemyśl on December 2, 1944, became painfully aware of this. Contrary to deportation plans, no representatives of the Polish authorities awaited them at the railway station and their Soviet escort had to search for them in town. Once summoned to the station, they went about sorting the newcomers, finding room and board for them in Przemyśl. The situation was not made any easier by the arrival of deputy gendarmerie commander Lieutenant Szumański around 10 PM, who, instead

2 Cit. per: Janusz Wrona, *Stosunki polsko-radzieckie w latach 1944-1945 i ich aspekty ukraińskie*, in: *Pogranicze. Studia z dziejów stosunków polsko-ukraińskich w XX wieku*, Lublin 1992, p. 98.

of maintaining order at the station, "went to work" arresting the newcomers. Only the intervention of the plenipotentiary for resettlement, Alojzy Roger, put a halt to the whole affair. He ordered Szumański to simply retire to his room. The confusion at the station encouraged the margins of Przemyśl society to organize attacks on the evacuees. Some were robbed, and one arriving man was stabbed – perhaps defending his personal belongings.

Nikita Khrushchev informed Stalin on September 29, 1944, that:

Poles, especially in Lvov, especially the intelligentsia [...] spread rumours that the border question has not yet been terminally settled and therefore no one should leave. The Polish government-in-exile in London issued a directive to its organizations in Lvov and other cities of Western Ukraine not to evacuate, promising that it would secure the incorporation of Lvov and other cities into the Polish state during the peace conference.

To speed up the evictions, Khrushchev proposed:

All colleges and secondary schools shall use textbooks and conduct classes in Ukrainian and Russian. [...] We also consider it necessary to abolish the provision [...] "On the prohibition of the mobilization of the Polish population from the western oblasts outside these territories for industrial work in the eastern oblasts of the USSR and other republics of the Soviet Union". It is necessary to involve the Polish population in the performance of all duties imposed on all other inhabitants of Soviet Ukraine. This means we will conduct the mobilization of the Polish population, both men and women living in the western oblasts of the USSR, for industry, construction of defensive facilities, and participation in other undertakings on an equal footing with the Ukrainian population³.

In November 1944, Khrushchev once again proposed that a portion of Poles from Lviv, Drohobych, and other cities be resettled in the industrial centers of eastern Ukraine, thus changing the national composition of Galicia's cities in favour of Ukrainians and Russians. He also asked for an intensification of conscription into the Polish Army, and if that was impossible, for Poles to be drafted into the Red Army. In his opinion, it might also have been advantageous to create special NKGB posts in Lviv and Drohobycz, exclusively tasked with combating the Polish underground.

This proposal was prompted by passive resistance to resettlement encouraged by the Polish underground. It fostered the hope in Polish society that all was not yet lost, that at least Lviv might remain in Poland once the Poles showed their reluctance to leave. Soviet arrests in the summer of 1944 inflicted painful

3 *Депортації. Західні землі України кінця 30-х – початку 50-х рр. Документи, матеріали, спогади*, v. 1, Lviv 1996, pp. 308-309.

losses on the Polish underground, but did not spell its end. Already in the fall of 1943, Home Army command began taking into account the possibility that the Soviets would enter Poland as occupants. Preparing for such a scenario, they decided to build a “conspiracy within a conspiracy”, an elite organization that was to take action against the communists. This organization, known as “NIE” (the first three letters of ‘niepodległość’ – independence; also meaning ‘no’), was also established in the Kresy. After Colonel Filipkowski was arrested, it was headed by Colonel Feliks “Carmen” Janson, the former chief of staff of Lwów Area, who used the pseudonym “Rajgras” within NIE. He quickly reestablished an organizational network that also covered Ternopil district and, to a lesser extent, Stanyslaviv. He managed to save a portion of the arms stores, money, and radio stations from confiscation. The plan this time was to create partisan detachments (one per district) and to prepare for an anti-Soviet uprising. There were also plans to blow up bridges over the Dniester River, but this idea was abandoned due to a lack of explosives. As part of a disinformation campaign, leaflets in Ukrainian were issued. They called for fighting the Bolsheviks on behalf of the UPA and suggested that the few remaining Poles no longer posed a threat to Ukrainian independence aspirations.

In October 1944, it was decided to actively oppose the repatriation of Poles. Attempts were made to burn down the PKWN premises in Drohobych, members of the resettlement committee and NKVD agents were killed. On February 8, 1945, a member of the Union of Polish Patriots, Zdzisław Bieliński, was executed, while in Drohobych a representative of the evacuation committee, Dr. Rzegadłowski, was seriously wounded. Single partisan units were also successfully created. A partisan unit under Lieutenant Mieczysław “Tancerka” Skowroń was created on the border of the Lviv and Stanyslaviv districts. Its task was to protect the Polish population and liquidate Soviet agents. In retaliation for the murder of several Poles in the village of Ruda-Antonówka in November of 1944, partisans of Home Army-“NIE” attacked a farmstead near Ruda, killing several Ukrainians. On March 8, 1945, a detachment of the NKVD caught up with the Polish partisans near Czerwona Góra in the Stryi district. The Soviets killed seven or even ten partisans (including the commander) and took two prisoners.

The Soviets began dismantling the Polish underground in western Ukraine as part of Operation Sejm by the beginning of 1944. After disarming the Home Army units in the summer of that year, they continued their intelligence activities. In September, they intercepted two radio stations and a printing press of the Polish underground, and on December 24, 1945, Major Bronisław “San” Zawadzki, the commander of Ternopil District; in January of 1945 Professor

Zbigniew Pazdro, the head of the Government Delegation, fell into Soviet hands. The development of the Polish underground in Eastern Galicia was finally interrupted by a wave of arrests carried out by the NKVD and NKGB in February 1945. Among those arrested was Colonel Janson, who was caught on February 19. The last remaining members of the underground tried their best to become invisible in this situation, holding back on any activity that would make it easier for the Soviets to track them down.

The backbone Home Army networks and Volhynian Government Delegation remained in conspiracy also in Volhynia, despite the UPA massacre. At the end of 1944, Halina Oliwa, a Home Army courier sent to Volhynia from the Lublin region, fell into the hands of the NKVD. Ruthless methods of investigation brought results once again. Numerous arrests, which took place in March 1945, paralyzed the Polish underground in Volhynia. Previously, the Soviets had already put members of the self-defence forces under investigation, arresting some of them on charges of collaborating with the Germans. It is true that Polish bases had to obtain permission to carry weapons each time from the German civil and security authorities, which gave the NKVD unfettered latitudes to use such accusations. Remaining members were drafted either into the "people's" Polish Army or the IBs. All this induced the majority of Poles still alive to leave westward.

Between 1944 and 1946 approximately four thousand people connected with the underground movement were arrested as part of Operation Sejm. The greatest number, as many as 1151, came from the Lviv region. In the previously cleansed Volhynia, 562 Polish conspirators were captured. Many of those imprisoned were sentenced to long stays in labour camps. Insurgents were not the only ones arrested. Poles were also forced to leave through the arrests of "anti-Soviet elements", in practice many representatives of the Polish intelligentsia. By January 9, 1945, the NKGB had arrested 772 people, including fourteen university professors, twenty-one engineers, six doctors, and five priests. In line with Khrushchev's proposals, the Soviet authorities proceeded to mobilize Poles for labour in the mines of the Donbas. Daily life became unbearable in the cities, where criminality reached critical levels. Violent assaults, robberies, and murders often carried out by roving gangs of Red Army marauders became a veritable scourge. In Lviv alone, from several to several dozen people were killed every month as a result of attacks (in August 1945, thirty-three people were murdered).

After the return of Stanisław Mikołajczyk to the country and the formation of the Provisional Government of National Unity, it became clear there was no chance of a rapid outbreak of a third global conflict that could result in border

changes in Poland's favour. This was bluntly expressed by Professor Stanisław Grabski, Deputy President of the National Council, during his visit to Lviv on August 30, 1945. At a meeting with Leopoldian intelligentsia, he stated:

The border between Poland and the USSR remains as it is now. That is why Poles have nothing to do here, they must leave as soon as possible to Poland, to settle the new territories that we have received after the war⁴.

Soviet terror on the one hand and UPA attacks on the other did not leave Poles with much hope for a peaceful life in the USSR. As Timothy Snyder aptly observed, "neither the word 'Soviet' nor the word 'Ukraine' had a particularly positive connotation for most of these people"⁵. In this situation, the most reasonable solution seemed to be to leave one's "little homeland" and move to the People's Republic of Poland, ruled, admittedly, by the communists, but at least formally an independent state. Everything seemed better than staying in a country where they were threatened with deportation deep into the USSR. Many decided to go to Poland precisely because they were afraid of being sent to the Donbas, Kazakhstan, or Siberia. As one "NIE" report stated:

Oppression and terror against the Poles are applied at every step and in every sphere of life [...]. While every Pole is capable of numerous sacrifices, remaining a Soviet citizen, even for a short while, is considered something beyond anyone's strength⁶.

In the summer of 1945, the number of people volunteering to leave markedly increased. However, this was by no means easy. There was a shortage of transport, and the wait at stations was endless. The journey often took place in scandalous conditions, sometimes even in open carriages. The difficult weather conditions resulted in the deaths of young children and elderly people in particular. In the transport that left Lutsk on December 23, 1944, eight infants aged between one and six months died on the stretch to Kovel alone. The disorder was overwhelming. The managers of the transports often did not know where to unload. A transport that left Buchach on November 19 for Rzeszów, 250 km away, did not arrive until December 10! Four people died while waiting at the border. Muggings of displaced persons were the order of the day. They fell victim to attacks by various criminal gangs awaiting at the loading stations. At

4 NKWD i polskie podziemie 1944-1945. Z "teczek specjalnych" Józefa W. Stalina, Kraków 1998, p. 209.

5 Timothy Snyder, *The Reconstruction of Nations. Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569-1999*, Sejny 2006, p. 212.

6 Cit. per: Tomasz Balbus, *O Polskę Wolną i Niezawisłą ...*, pp. 86-87.



Fig. 55 Displaced from Stanyslaviv/Staniśławów during a ten-day repatriation transport delay in Ligota near Katowice, July 1945.

the border, Soviet border guards searched the displaced and took away their wedding rings or jewelry, though according to the law these were exportable. Such incidents were recorded at the Rava-Ruska and Nyzhankovychi crossings.

Despite these appalling conditions, almost eight hundred thousand people left the USSR by mid-1946. Alongside the thousands of civilians, members of the underground also left. In August 1945, given the futility of further resistance, commander of "NIE" Lviv Area, Colonel Jan "Janina" Władyka, ordered to proceed with the organization's self-decommissioning. He, as one of the last, left for Poland in October 1945. The underground's soldiers took with them on their way west, when possible, small arms and intel materials. They established an extraterritorial Home Army-WiN Lviv Area in Silesia, which the Secret Police did not manage to break up until 1948.

Small groups of Polish conspirators remained in Galicia, from time to time even carrying out combat operations. Sooner or later, however, they fell victim to inevitable Soviet round-ups. As Poles left for the cities, more and more Ukrainian villagers arrived, attracted by the possibility of improving their lot. The Soviets began to erase traces of Polish presence, which was perhaps most clearly evidenced by the destruction of the Cemetery of the Defenders of Lwów.

25.2 The Displacement of Ukrainians

At the same time, an exodus of displaced Ukrainians and Lemkos occurred in the opposite direction, to Ukraine. In 1944 about 630 thousand Ukrainians and Lemkos lived on the lands of today's Poland. Some of them were supporters of communism and the USSR (especially in the Lublin region and Low Beskids). They willingly joined the militia and UB, even the Red Army. Many Ukrainians worked in the UB in Włodawa and Tomaszów Lubelski. It was probably they who signed various petitions to have their localities incorporated into the USSR.

Much more numerous, however, were those who identified themselves more with a religion (Orthodox or Greek Catholic) than with any particular nationality. Among the Lemkos, only some felt a connection to Ukrainianness, most considered themselves a separate ethnic group, while Muscovite sympathies were not uncommon. The signing of agreements on population exchange between Poland and the USSR constituted a heavy blow to the Ukrainians and Lemkos. Most of them reacted reluctantly to this initiative. Regardless of the state of their national consciousness, religious affiliation, or political sympathies, they were all united in their opposition to going east and abandoning their homes.

Resettlement of the Ukrainian population from Poland began as early as 1944, but before August 1945 it was essentially voluntary – essentially only because, though direct pressure was not applied, attempts were made to “encourage” Ukrainians to leave, for example by excluding them from land reforms and by strictly collecting quotas from those who did not volunteer for repatriation. Decisions to abolish Ukrainian education also served as “encouragement”. The people leaving for the USSR at this time were mainly those with leftist views or those who had lost all their possessions as a result of the war effort and were tempted by the vision of prosperity awaiting them in the USSR, propagated by communist agitators. Some gave in to the pressure of the resettlement apparatus, others simply gave up, terrified by the wave of murders sweeping across the new borderlands. By March 1, 1945, eighty one thousand of the approximately 600,000 Ukrainians living in “new Poland” had left. However, in July 1945, partially as a result of the agreements between the Home Army and UPA, the resettlement action collapsed completely. As a result, a conference was held at the Ministry of Public Administration in Warsaw with the participation of Ukrainian delegates from the Lublin, Rzeszów, and Krakow voivodeships on July 24. The delegates unanimously demanded the principle of voluntary departure be observed, Ukrainian education restored, and Ukrainians treated as full citizens of the new Polish state. They also proposed

an amnesty for members of the Ukrainian underground. The results of the conference convinced the communist authorities that resettlement could only be carried out by force. For this reason, several divisions of the Polish Army were sent to the southeastern districts of present-day Poland. The resettlement operation began on September 3, 1945. It started in the districts of Lubaczów, Przemyśl, Lesko, and Sanok.

Tragic scenes took place during the operation: soldiers committed robberies, rapes, and even murders. Although the Polish Army issued various orders forbidding the confiscation of Ukrainians' belongings, at the same time military documents admitted that soldiers "plunder property left over by Ukrainians. There are cases even of houses of displaced persons being dismantled by the army, which then uses the obtained material for firewood or sale"⁷. "Role models" were often officers, the most glaring example being the conduct of the commander of the 36th Infantry Regiment, Lieutenant Colonel Nikolai Kiryluk. In the report of Lesko district alderman Tadeusz Pawlusiewicz of January 1, 1946, we read:

In connection with the stationing in this district of the regiment of the 36th Division, led by Commander Colonel Kiryluk, I report as follows: [...] The displacement of the Ukrainian population, through employing the above-mentioned Regiment, has [...] produced almost no results. The only thing that has taken place has been a series of robberies of inventory, clothes, and equipment from the population, who, not wanting to go to the East, left their villages and hid in the woods. Even Poles who remained home were looted. [...] Citizen Kiryluk orders his subordinates to bring local girls to his quarters for debauchery. Arrested women he orders brought to his quarters (as if for interrogation), and forces them to have sexual intercourse with each other, threatening them with a revolver. On market days, citizen Kiryluk conducts mass roundups, arrests people under the pretext of being Banderites, disrupts the market, holds people in prison and then releases them for ransom. Recently he took 25,000 zlotys from Postolów village. [...] Recently, during the burning of Mchawa village in the Baligród municipality, about 40 Ukrainian farmsteads were burned down for the killings of two Polish soldiers by Banderites, but why then were 14 Polish farmsteads burned down in the process? And five Poles were killed, when the Poles were completely innocent and constantly persecuted by the Banderites.

This demoralization among soldiers was a common occurrence at the time. In March of 1946, in Sanok, one drunk officer shot a ticket checker and a random woman when he was refused a cinema ticket. In July of that year near Przemyśl, a captain of the Polish Army shot a switchman standing in uniform and with

⁷ Central Military Archive of Poland (CAW), 84/241/55, p. 39. Ordinance no. 010 34 PP signed by LT Bereznicki, serving as regiment chief-of-staff, and WO Dyrondo.

a flashlight next to a semaphore during a train ride because he thought he was stealing coal. This type of behaviour was undoubtedly influenced by a lack of adequate supplies and the prolonged period of service.

It should be noted, however, that part of the Polish administration and army tried to counteract (or rather boycott) the deportations to Ukraine. In one Ukrainian report, the following was written on this subject: "Now it is occasionally the case that some people throw out the door, and others through the window support the spirit of the intimidated grandfather so that he is not afraid and can stand his ground"⁸. It sometimes happened that Polish Army officers warned inhabitants about a coming displacement, advising them to hide in the forests. They explained that Bolsheviks supported the displacements, not the Polish Army and administration. In this situation, it was no wonder that local Ukrainians – additionally encouraged or even forced by the Ukrainian underground – tried avoiding the deportations at all costs. They fled into the surrounding forests, sheltered in various hideouts, and waited out the manhunts in the Bieszczady Mountains on the territory of Czechoslovakia. It was not uncommon for Greek Catholics to convert to the Roman Catholic rite. For these reasons, the displacements brought poor results initially. However, the army changed its tactics after the initial failures:

We approach the village at dawn, leave the wagons at a decent distance, keep silent, cordon off the village, set up machine-gun posts on the hills and only then enter the village. The results are immediately apparent: we find the families all together, and any escape attempts are thwarted by warning fire⁹.

The captured population was directed to assembly points, from where it was later sent to the USSR. The Ukrainians were usually transported by rail, but sometimes also by transport vehicles. As in the case of the expulsions of Poles from Ukraine, the authorities had trouble finding enough wagons from the very beginning, so the displaced often had to wait at railway stations for several weeks in primitive conditions. Robberies by various criminal gangs were commonplace. The journey itself also often passed in scandalous conditions, which again resulted in the deaths of small children and elderly people.

The repressions also affected representatives of the Greek Catholic Church. Immediately after the deportations began, on September 19, 1945, the Greek Catholic Bishop of Przemyśl Yosafat Kotsylovskyi was arrested. Deported in January 1946 to the USSR, he was turned back by the Soviets at the border

⁸ TsDAVOVU, c. 3833, d. 1, v. 153, p. 44.

⁹ Relacja Józefa Dolińskiego, *Wojskowy Instytut Historyczny, Relacje i wspomnienia*, IV/44/220, p. 38.

for unclear reasons and briefly released. Whenever the opportunity presented itself, the Soviets cleverly aggravated Polish-Ukrainian resentments, ensuring details of the hierarch's arrest spread among local Ukrainians. Bishop Kotsylovskiy's return made the UB furious. The head of the Voivodeship UB Office in Rzeszów, Captain Tomasz Wiśniewski, complained: "This wretch deported to the USSR, I don't know by what right he has returned to Poland. He walks the streets with his hanging beard and convinces Ukrainians that the instruction states the departure is voluntary"¹⁰. On June 25, Kotsylovskiy was arrested again, as was suffragan bishop Grzegorz Łakota; soon after, this time irrevocably, both were deported deep into the USSR. They died in the Soviet gulags, beatified as martyrs for their faith by Pope John Paul II.



Fig. 56
Yosafat Kotsylovskiy – Greek Catholic bishop in Przemyśl from 1917. Arrested by the Department of Security in June 1946 and deported to the USSR, died in a Soviet camp. Photograph from before 1939.

The displacement noticeably decreased in intensity during the winter months. However, in March 1946, it was extended to Jarosław County and Lubelskie Voivodeship. In April 1946, in Rzeszów Voivodeship, Operational Group "Rzeszów" was established, which intensified the displacement operation, expanding it to even the most inaccessible parts of the Bieszczady Mountains. Between June 1-5, 1946, alone, the 34th Infantry Regiment displaced the

10 Cit. per: Igor Hałagida, "Szpieg Watykanu". *Kapłan greckokatolicki ks. Bazyli Hrynyk (1896-1977)*, Warsaw 2008, pp. 46-47.

following villages in this region: Beniowa, Sianki, Bukowiec, Tarnawa Niżna, Tarnawa Wyżna, Stuposiany, Procisna (Ukrainian: Benova, Sianki, Bukovets, Nyzhnia Ternava, Vyzhnia Ternava, Stuposiany, Potisne). During those few days, the operation encompassed 1540 families, that is 7766 people.



Fig. 57 Polish Army soldiers during a Ukrainian displacement operation, Bieszczady 1946.

The ruthlessness of the operation is evidenced by the report of Captain Szałapat from the 14th Infantry Regiment:

Simultaneously with the march-through of the 34th Infantry Regiment, a series of fires appeared along its route. As they advanced, subunits covering the 34th's flanks burned everything they came across on the way, including haystacks, which could be of great use in the future given the local lack of provisions. When we asked the soldiers why they were burning so indiscriminately, they answered that it was an order [...]. However, one could see in all these soldiers a definite loutishness and quite disinterested desire to destroy for the sake of destroying [...]. In the face of such behaviour of the soldiers of the 34th IF, the commander of our regiment was forced to send out patrols that would protect our quarters from being burned down¹¹.

11 CAW, IV 521. 8.112, p. 112.

In the final months of the operation, displacements were carried out in the districts of Gorlice, Łańcut, Nowy Sącz, Nowy Targ, and Rzeszów. However, these brought few results, mainly because the local Polish administration released most of the captured people.

The displacement action was completed on July 1, 1946. It encompassed a total of 482,661 people. The next few months were supposed to be devoted to "cleaning" the area, so in July, county aldermen were asked for lists of Ukrainians still to be displaced. In Lesko county, information was provided on ... two individuals. This indicates that the administration of at least some counties was not enthusiastic about further uprooting. In total, about six thousand people were displaced up to December 1946. The campaign was finally completed at the end of 1946, with the official number coming to 488,612 displaced persons.

The Ukrainian Underground in Poland 1945-1946

In February 1945, the OUN-B Central Provid made organizational changes to the structure of the Ukrainian underground. Given the establishment of new national borders, it was decided, among other things, to create a separate National OUN Provid in Poland and the territorially corresponding VI “San” UPA Military District. Until that time, the Zamość region was subordinate to the OUN-B and UPA in Volhynia, while the Przemyśl region and Bieszczady Mountains were part of the organization’s Galician structures. The Ukrainian underground in Poland was headed by: Yaroslav “Stiah” Starukh, who was in charge of the civilian network, Major Miroslav “Orest” Onyshkevych, the former’s political subordinate, Petro “Dalnych” Fedoriv, who was in charge of the OUN Security Service, and Vasyl “Orlan” Halasa, who was responsible for propaganda activities.



Fig. 58
Yaroslav “Stiah” Starukh.

Yaroslav Starukh had joined the OUN in 1929 at the age of nineteen. He was expelled from Jan Kazimierz University in Lviv, where he studied law, because of his membership in the organization. In May 1939, he was sentenced to

thirteen years' imprisonment; his freedom was restored when the Germans invaded Poland. After the split, he became one of the OUN-B leaders, responsible for the organization's propaganda activities – he was appointed deputy propaganda minister in Yaroslav Stetsko's government. At the end of 1943 and the beginning of 1944 he was in charge of the underground OUN radio station "Independent Ukraine". It was probably these experiences in propaganda work that led to his nomination for the post of national providnik.

Throughout its existence, the UPA's main area of operations was the western regions of Ukraine. The territory of today's Poland, referred to as "Zakerzonskyi Krai" (the land beyond the Curzon Line), was of secondary importance to the Ukrainian underground, though there were, of course, plans to incorporate it into an independent Ukraine in the future. Yet, "Zakerzonnia" was considered a "window onto the world" through which one could inform about the struggle of the Ukrainians against the Soviet state. To this end, it was intended, on the one hand, to establish contacts with the embassies of Western countries in Poland and, on the other, to create channels of communication between Ukraine and Western Europe. The second important task of the OUN and UPA in Poland was to defend Ukrainian property, which in practice meant opposing deportations.

After signing the agreement with Home Army-WiN, relations between Poles and Ukrainians normalized to such an extent that the Ukrainian underground saw no reason to strengthen partisan units in Poland. Thus, in August 1945, there were only four to five "mother" sotnias inside the UPA "San" District plus a few that had come on leave from Ukraine. From among the "mother" units, the sotnia of Vasyl "Bir" Shishkanynets was stationed in the Bieszczady Mountains. On the territory of the districts of Lubaczów, Jarosław and Tomaszów Lubelski operated two units subordinate to Zalizniak, in the Lublin region – one sotnia codenamed the "Wolves". In the Przemyśl Foothills no sotnia operated at all; local units, including the one commanded by Burlaka, were disbanded and incorporated into the so-called Samooboronna Kushchovi Viddily (SKW) which was tasked with protecting villages. It is worth noting, however, that the SKW was very strong at that time, especially in the Przemyśl Foothills.

The beginning of the displacement of the Ukrainian population by the army changed the situation. The OUN-B and UPA leadership decided to fiercely oppose it. An additional impulse towards intensifying sabotage actions was the arrival of General Dmytr "Perebyinis" Hrytsai, UPA's Chief of General Staff, and OUN-B Provisional Bureau member Dmytro "Taras" Mayivshy in the Bieszczady Mountains in October/November 1945. The men intended to get through to the West, and conducted a revision of the underground along their way. They reprimanded the underground leadership for their passivity

and disbanding of some of their units, recommending full mobilization and large-scale combat operations that would reverberate in the West. After giving the appropriate orders they set off, but were discovered in Czechoslovakia and committed suicide.

On September 9, 1945, the UPA command gave its troops the order to oppose the resettlement operation. The partisans were to destroy the resettlement committees "and all those who force [the population – G.M.] to leave". The UPA men were to also burn abandoned villages after securing all belongings that could be useful to the troops in future combat. A special annex ordered that the operations be "anti-Bolshevik but not anti-Polish in nature"¹. Therefore, burning Polish villages and individual houses of Poles living among Ukrainians was forbidden. It was also forbidden to kill civilians. Only "in extreme cases" were individual houses or parts of villages allowed to be razed. However one assesses the authenticity of these instructions, there is no doubt they remained largely on paper, as at least some UPA commanders attempted to interpret them broadly.

To fulfill Perebyinis' commands, new partisan units were formed. Four UPA units were mustered at that time: "Rena" (under Vasyl Mizernyi), "Baida" (Petro Mykolenko), "Zalizniak" (Ivan Skpontak) and "Berkut" (Volodymyr Sorochak). Each of them consisted of four to five sotnias. Concurrently, entire SKW units deployed to the forests; some sotnias, like Burlak's for example, were not so much as created out of these as reformed. Several UPA units also operated in Poland, including Volodymyr "Myron" Hoshka's unit, whose usual operating areas were located in the USSR.

A little more space should be devoted to the UPA sotnia under Stepan "Khrin" Stebelskyi, which was formed in the autumn of 1945 in the Bieszczady Mountains. When it reached a strength of about 200 men, a second unit commanded by "Stakh" (N.N.) was split off from it on June 1, 1946. This was the only UPA unit composed of Lemkos. The creation of a purely Lemko UPA unit was probably important for the Ukrainian underground not only from a military point of view but also from a political one. It served as proof that Lemkos felt Ukrainian. The aforementioned Stepan Stebelskyi, a former teacher and supporter of ruthless anti-Polish operations, was appointed commander of this unit. In his memoirs, Khrin wrote the following about the composition of his sotnia:

I discovered that up to 70% of them were unable to read or write. I started raiding with the new recruits right away, educating and training them in the process.

1 Літопис УПА, v. 33, Toronto–Lviv 2001, pp. 523-524.

[...] To gain the Lemkos favour, my first slogan was: "We are off to defend your villages". It was only after a few months that I began discussing the protection of the entire Lemkivshchyna. Eventually, I expanded their political horizon to include all of Ukraine, making statehood and soborhood [unity of Ukrainian lands – G.M.] the main slogans of our struggle².

Some members of the unit were forcibly conscripted. One of them, Jan Pulanda from Polany Surowiczne (Poliany Surovychni), mobilized in March 1946, surrendered to the Polish Army at the first opportunity. When interrogated, he testified:

They told us they were taking us into the army on Bandera's orders. They have to fight for Free Ukraine, England will declare war on Russia any day, while Turkey is already fighting her. [...] Talking amongst ourselves when we were alone [...], we admitted we were in a bad spot. The boys from Puławy said that they had nowhere to run. However, a dozen or so from other villages escaped. Only one of them, Stefan Chomyszak from Surowica, was caught and shot in Jawornik. One guy, on Hryn's [Khrin's – G.M.] order, shot him in the back of the head with a pistol. That's why we were later put under watch³.

At least several such sentences were carried out on deserters in Khrin's sotnia.

The Ukrainian insurgency carried out dozens of operations aimed at stopping the displacement. They destroyed railroads, bridges, razed emptied villages, organized ambushes on army units, and did not hesitate to attack stronger garrisons and engage Polish Army pursuit groups. In the Lublin region, the 3rd Infantry Division lost twenty-seven soldiers killed by the end of 1945 in continuous skirmishes with the UPA, while four men were considered missing and sixty seven wounded. In the Przemyśl Foothills, the UPA attacked the garrison in Bircza three times, with only the last attack in January 1946 failing.

One of the UPA's greatest successes was the liquidation of Border Protection Troops (WOP) outposts in the Bieszczady Mountains in early 1946. This operation began on March 20 when sotnias "Khrin" and "Myron" attacked an expedition that was supposed to evacuate an outpost in Jasiel. After a short battle, the Banderites took several dozen soldiers prisoner. Of these, about twenty were released but as many as sixty were executed (this very motif was later used by Jan Gerhard in his novel "Łuna w Bieszczadach" [Afterglow in the Bieszczady Mountains], though he turned the execution into a ritual murder

2 Степан Хрін (Степан Стебельський), *Зимою в бункрі. Спогади-хроніка*, Munich 1950, p. 129.

3 CAW, IV 521. 8.16, 8 Infantry Division, Confession of Jan Pulanda from 15 April 1946.

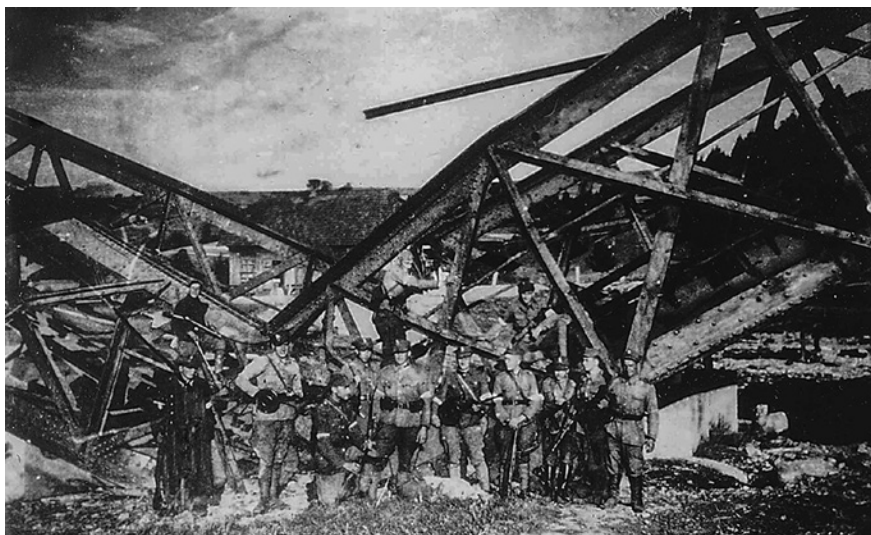


Fig. 59 A bridge destroyed by Stepan "Khrin" Stebelskyi's sotnia, Komańcza, 1946.

by beheading with an axe). The inhilation of the expedition sent to Jasiel forced the WOP to evacuate the weakened outpost crews in Komańcza, Wola Michowa, and Radoszyce to Łupków, from where, under UPA pressure, they crossed over into Czechoslovakia. To succour the endangered WOP outposts, a group of about 170 WOP and Polish Army troops commanded by Major Jurij (?) Frołow was mobilized from Zagórze. It fell into a UPA ambush in the area of Wysoczany and Kożuszne villages. The Poles suffered heavy losses, barely escaping an encirclement in Kożuszny; more than thirty soldiers were killed. Of the more significant defeats of the Polish Army, it is worth mentioning an ambush into which the NCO school of the 28th Infantry Regiment fell on June 27, 1946, in Przemyśl county. The surprised soldiers scattered, leaving their wounded colleagues on the battlefield. Twenty-two men were killed and seven wounded.

In response to the ruthlessness of the displacement action, the UPA's sotnias also carried out attacks on Polish towns. They burnt down, among others: Nowosielce (30.12.1945), Deszno and Wołuszowa (6.01.1946), Lipowiec, Królik Wołoski and part of Królik Polski (11.01.1946), Bukowsko (5/6.04.1946), Witryłów, Łodzina and Temeszów (10.09.1946) and Prusiek (21/22.10.1946). Although it was forbidden to kill civilians in these operations, there were many such victims. Probably the bloodiest event was the burning of the village of Nowosielce, where seventeen civilians were killed.

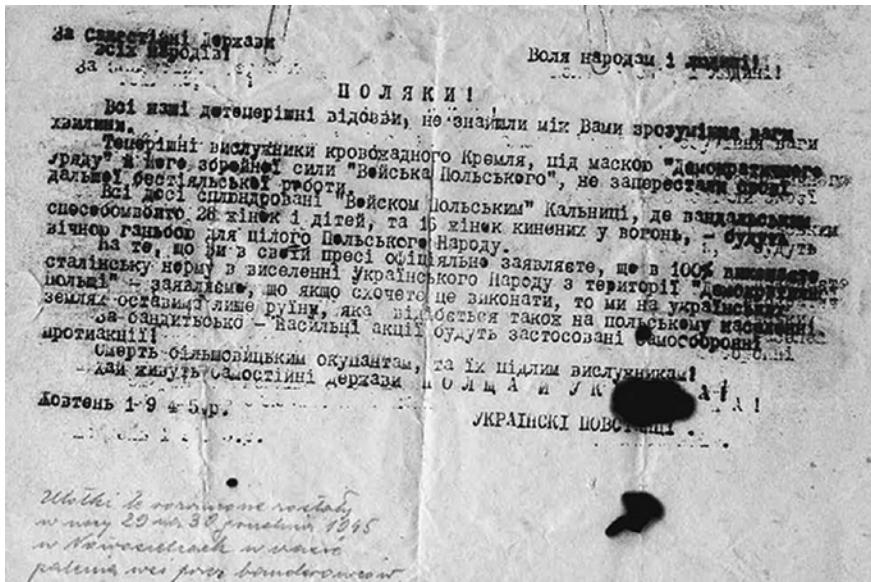


Fig. 60 A leaflet distributed during the burning of Nowosielce near Sanok by the UPA on the night of December 29, 1945.

There would likely have been more such operations had it not been for Ren's restraint. He reigned in the inclinations of his subordinates, forbidding such actions as killing POWs or carrying out operations that could end in the massacre of civilians. The abandonment of the plan to destroy the village of Niebieszczany, where a strong Polish self-defence force was located, was probably due to his insistence, although Khrin (who dreamed of pushing the Polish population at least as far as Sanok, perhaps even of capturing and burning that town as well) strongly demanded that his unit be reinforced to carry out the attack.

Razing of Polish villages took place mainly in the Rzeszów land, which is why the UPA broke off cooperation with the Home Army-WiN at the end of 1945. In the Lublin land, the UPA avoided bloody operations, so there the "alliance" with the Polish underground not only survived but even resulted in several joint military actions against the communists.

It cannot be overlooked that the partisans carried out their operations without regard for losses among their own civilian population. The UPA often shot at columns of displaced persons to disperse them. Most Ukrainian casualties were probably caused by mine traps laid by the UPA on roads. Eight displaced persons died stepping on mines laid by Myron's sotnia on June 11, 1946 on the Strubowiska-Kalnica road alone. The Polish Army soldiers who led the



Fig. 61 Threshing in burned-down Bukowsko, September 1946.

displacement nonetheless caused more suffering to the Ukrainian population. Cases of revenge against civilians by enraged Polish Army units took place. On January 24, 1946, a skirmish with the UPA broke out near the village of Zawadka Morochowska; when the operational group sent the next day to the spot of the clash did not find partisans in the village, they massacred the population, killing about fifty people, including women and children. In the following weeks, about twenty more people were killed in successive pacifications in this village. At the same time, five or even fourteen people died in Karlikowo, and seven in Wisłok Wielki.

In this situation, it is not surprising that the UPA's activities were supported by a large part of the Ukrainian community. The partisans were perceived as sole defenders against expulsion from one's home and displacement to the east. It is likely the UPA would not have gained such support if it had not been for the displacement operation and the brutal actions of the Polish Army tied to it. As the commander of the 34th Infantry Regiment, Lieutenant Colonel Jan Gerhard, noted: "due to the often very bad behaviour of the army (which is often quite justifiable on the part of a tired and enraged soldier) a dangerous gap is being dug between us and the population as this population walks straight into the clutches of the bandits"⁴.

4 Institute of National Remembrance Archive (AIPN), 846/625, p. 122.

The end of the displacements to Ukraine did not signal an end to the partisan fighting. Particularly tragic events took place in the area of Wołkowyja-Terka (later presented in distorted light by Wanda Żółkiewska in her teen novel “Ślady Rysich pazurów” [Tracks of Lynx Claws]). At the beginning of July 1946, OUN Security Services abducted three people from Terka: two Ukrainians and one Pole. Upon hearing of this, the army designated a group of hostages and threatened to sentence them to death if anything happened to those captured by the UPA. The nationalists’ response came straight away. One of the abductees was released, but the other two, Michał Łoszyn and Jan Gankiewicz, were hanged in the village. On July 8 or 9, WOP men brought twenty-eight people, mostly women and children, to Terka. “The arrested children and women were locked up in one of the huts in the upper part of the village, and one of the bandits cut them down with an automatic, then tore them apart with a grenade. They set fire to the house and burned those who were still alive. [...] Only a 14-year-old boy, one Vasyl Soniak, managed to escape”⁵. At the same time, soldiers combed the village, killing the few old men remaining in Terka. In total, thirty three people were murdered.



Fig. 62 Hłomcza near Sanok burned down by the UPA on the night of September 10, 1946.

5 Літопис УПА, v. 34, p. 103.

The UPA's retaliation came soon after. On the night of July 14, Roman "Brodyh" Hrobelskyi's sotnia, supported by the Security Service Militia (BSB), struck Wołkowyja around midnight. The UPA men managed to surprise and push back the Polish posts. The sudden attack brought them to a distance of 30 meters from the presbytery, where WOP HQ and a Citizens' Militia (MO) post were located, but they were stopped by heavy machine gun fire. The battle lasted several hours. "While 2 groups of Banderites attacked WP staff and the MO post, a third group burned Polish houses and murdered the Polish population. Ten people were murdered in a barbaric manner with knives, including one three-year-old girl who was sliced with a knife"⁶. Sixty buildings were razed. The soldiers had one officer and one militiaman killed and several wounded. "Of the civilian population, 11 people were killed, 3 of them Ukrainians, one child, while 7 were from the village of Terka, among whom was a relative of one of the bandits"⁷. UPA losses amounted to 2 killed and 4-5 slightly wounded.

Until mid-1946, the Polish Army's successes against Ukrainian partisans were small. Most roundups came up empty-handed. However, in the summer of that year, the army implemented new tactics, adapted to partisan methods. Forests and villages were combed by designated operational groups, searching for traces of the insurgents. Thanks to this, some successes finally began being achieved. The biggest of these was the work of a 70-strong Polish Army detachment commanded by Second Lieutenant Błażej on August 24, 1946. The Poles overtook Khrin's sotnia as it rested in Choceń. Despite the Ukrainians' numerical superiority, they killed twenty-four UPA men without any losses, taking two prisoner. In the autumn of that year, Khrin suffered another defeat, losing a well-stocked camp on Chryszczata Peak. These and similar actions of the Polish Army eroded the strength and morale of the Ukrainian insurgency but failed to entirely wipe out any UPA sotnia.

The activity of Ukrainian partisans prompted the Polish People's Party (PSL) to submit a motion to the State National Council (KRN) to appoint a special commission to investigate the situation in Rzeszów and Lublin provinces in the areas where Ukrainian partisans were operational. Thereby, the PSL directed a clear attack against the communists for their inaction in this regard. Ultimately, this commission did not come into being, and Minister of Public Security Stanisław Radkiewicz, in response, stated: "If it were a question of the political sense behind the PSL motion – I must declare it has a specific aftertaste. The question arises as to why the PSL put forward this motion and

6 CAW, IV 521. 8.16, p. 242, Recon report from 17 July 1946, 2nd unit 8 ID.

7 CAW, IV 521. 8.55, 8 Infantry Division, Special report of a Banderite attack in Wołkowyja on 15 July 1946.

limited the issues around security to the Rzeszów and Lublin regions only [...]. It [...] only concerns the issue of Ukrainian bands. For us, for the democratic camp, it is important to clear the area of any kind of reactionary bands, be it Ukrainian or Polish, to clear it of Ukrainian and Polish bands”⁸. Radkiewicz’s statement is the best testimony to how the Polish communists treated the matter of combating the UPA. The main enemy for them was not the UPA itself, but the Polish underground and opposition. In a special report drawn up at the Supreme Command of the Polish Army in the spring of 1946, UPA units were described as having “a rather temporary character”. “The activity of reactionary bands of the NSZ and AK has a more permanent character (one that looks poised to endure longer)”, we read further on in that report. “These form the greatest concentration of bands and constitute the main danger [...] especially during election struggles”⁹. Polish Army Command believed that the UPA problem would resolve itself once the Ukrainian population left for the USSR.

After the official termination of deportations to Ukraine, the Ukrainians and Lemkos who remained in Poland quickly concluded that the activity of the OUN and UPA had lost all sense. The insurgency garnered less and less support from the local population. Ukrainians believed that they should therefore not provoke the Poles any longer, that the worst was over and a time for peaceful life had come. UPA command estimated that Ukrainians wanted “first and foremost peace. Plundered, ruined, terrorized, they want to rest, want to return to normal modes of conduct”¹⁰.

The least support for the UPA was among Lemkos living in the Lower Beskids. In autumn of 1945, only a narrow organizational network existed in this region, which consisted of no more than several dozen people. This situation remained unchanged by the raids of stronger groups of OUN-B and UPA conducted in October 1945 and June-July 1946. Very often the population considered it its duty to inform the authorities of the “forest people” appearing in their vicinity. This state of affairs was assessed in a UPA report thusly: “The population does not pay attention to our movements. They do not believe in our success and [...] treat us with contempt... .] It is impossible to achieve anything via propaganda, as the population here is not interested in books or newspapers”¹¹. This is how Lieutenant Colonel Gerhard described the Lemkos’ situation:

8 *Sprawozdanie stenograficzne z posiedzeń Krajowej Rady Narodowej w dn. 20, 21, 22 i 23 września 1946 r.*, Warsaw 1946, pp. 475-476.

9 Ignacy Blum, *Z dziejów Wojska Polskiego w latach 1944-1948. Szkice i dokumenty*, Warsaw 1968, p. 54.

10 AIPN, MBP, X 16, pp. 28-29.

11 *Ibidem*, X 8, pp. 181-182, Files on Myroslav Onyshkevych.

The population of the Rzeszów region is a Ukrainian offshoot known as the Lemkos, who have never had much to do with Ukrainian chauvinism. This population is currently the most unhappy in all of Poland. Harassed as much by the bands as by the army, they simply find no way out of their misery. Villages burn, set on fire by bandits out of revenge, or by the army during combat, cattle is taken by the bandits for their quota, for which the army punishes the people, who live under the constant threat of the rifle of one side or the other. This population has no political attitudes. They are simply exhausted and want one thing only: PEACE¹².

These descriptions demonstrate how little was needed to gain the support of at least part, if not most, of the remaining Ukrainian population in Poland for the Polish state.

In the winter of 1946/1947, there was a real chance to carry out an effective anti-partisan military action without resorting to ethnic cleansing in south-eastern Poland. It was possible to completely liquidate the UPA units operating there or at least expel them from the country. Such action, not bolstered by displacements, would certainly have been more difficult, but completely feasible, realistic, and limited to a relatively small territory. The matter concerned a narrow strip of the border, mainly Roztocze, the Przemyśl Foothills, Bieszczady, and to a much lesser extent the Low Beskids where only one sotnia operated (and had come from Bieszczady only in 1946, surviving in the field with difficulty due to a lack of Lemko support). It was possible to get rid of the partisans by, firstly, directing numerous Polish Army units against them consisting of well-trained soldiers, and secondly, winning over the civilian population, promising rewards in exchange for loyalty to the Polish state.

Such an operation did not take place, given the communist authorities' belief that the main threat to them was posed by Stanisław Mikołajczyk's PSL and the Polish independence underground. Therefore, in the winter of 1946/1947, the majority of Polish Army forces were directed to secure (read: falsify) the results of the elections to the Legislative Assembly, which took place in January 1947. In the winter of that year, the Polish underground and PSL were combatted by fifty-six thousand soldiers of the Polish Army.

The "results" of the elections to the Legislative Sejm broke public resistance to communism in Poland. The amnesty announced in February 1947 led in turn to the disbandment of most Polish partisan units. Only a handful of "unbroken" remained in the forests. The defeat of the "homegrown reaction" allowed the communists to deliberate how to solve the Ukrainian question in peace.

12 AIPN 846/625, p. 121.

The officers of the Polish Army were strongly in favour of the resettlement of the remaining population to Ukraine or the western territories. This theme appeared many times in subsequent reports sent "to the top". The commander of the 34th Infantry Regiment, Lieutenant Colonel Jan Gerhard, was also in favour of such a solution. The army accepted the option of total population displacement not because this represented the only way to liquidate the UPA but because it seemed to be the easiest to carry out. Undoubtedly, when conducting anti-partisan operations, it was necessary to "separate" the population from the partisans, but this did not have to mean displacement. The WiN and NSZ guerrilla units, which enjoyed support similar to that of the Ukrainian units, were destroyed without resorting to mass deportations. It is peculiar that the authorities did not declare an amnesty for UPA members; nor did they try to win over the local population in any other way, even through land distribution, given how much was available after the resettlements to Ukraine in 1944-1946.

There was one additional argument for getting rid of Ukrainians and Lemkos. In 1944, Stalin decided that the Polish People's Republic was to be an ethnically homogeneous state. Therefore, only those who showed promise in terms of assimilating could remain in the country. Meanwhile, the activities of the OUN-B and the UPA convinced the Polish communists that simply destroying the Ukrainian underground would not work. Since the Soviet authorities refused to accept further transports of Ukrainians from Poland, the only solution was to deport them to the western territories and disperse them. In late 1946 and early 1947, the first lists of people to be resettled were drawn up. However, there were no plans to rush the operation. According to plan, it was to be carried out in the autumn of 1947, concurrently with another deportation of Ukrainians that the Soviets planned to carry out inside the USSR. This would have resulted in a large-scale two-front operation in Poland and Ukraine, intended to "bring order" to the situation on the Polish-Ukrainian border. In the meantime, it was decided to harass the UPA with constant raids. At the beginning of 1947, immediately after the rigged parliamentary elections, Internal Security Corps maneuver groups entered the field. February and March 1947 saw a series of fierce Polish-Ukrainian clashes, which forced the UPA sotnias in the Przemyśl Foothills and Bieszczady Mountains into constant field maneuvers.

The UPA, however, did not intend to lay down its arms. At dawn on March 28, 1947, the combined sotnias under Khrin and Stakh, about one hundred and forty men strong, left their encampment and reached the Baligród-Cisna road near the village of Jabłonki at about 9 AM. Hardly had the partisans taken up positions when two cars carrying thirty-three soldiers arrived from the direction

of Baligród. They were immediately fired upon. The soldiers jumped from the cars and tried attacking the enemy positions but were forced to retreat. They retreated behind a nearby stream, leaving three dead on the battlefield. A portion of them succumbed to panic. Two partisans ran to the abandoned cars, but, disappointingly, found no supplies inside. When another car carrying a group of soldiers arrived, the partisans began their retreat.

After returning to camp, Khrin deemed the ambush unsuccessful, complaining that the cars had not been incinerated. It was only from Polish newspapers that the partisans later learned that General Karol "Walter" Świerczewski, Deputy Minister of Defense, had died at their hands. In this way, the accidental ambush did bring Khrin and Stakh's sotnias success, making them the best-known UPA units in Poland. On April 1, 1947, not far from the place of Walter's death, another UPA sotnia from Bieszczady, commanded by "Bir", scored another victory, destroying completely a 30-person WOP unit.



Fig. 63 The body of General Karol Świerczewski, killed in a UPA ambush, Jabłonki near Baligród, March 28, 1947.

Moved by these UPA operations, Lieutenant Colonel Wacław Kossowski, who had come to the Bieszczady Mountains to compile a report on the circumstances around General Świerczewski's death, proposed in his conclusion:

It would be advisable to organize in the nearest future an operational group that would work out a plan of operation including, among other things, the complete

extermination of the remnants of the Ukrainian population in the south-eastern borderlands of Poland, displacement of the mixed population that supported the UPA bands from the mountainous areas of Rzeszów Province, and the complete destruction of Ukrainian bands¹³.

Writing these words, Lieutenant Colonel Kossowski was unaware his proposals were late coming. The authorities of “people’s” Poland had already decided on how to deal with the Ukrainian and Lemko minorities.

13 *Akcja “Wisła”. Dokumenty*, ed. Eugeniusz Miśło, Warsaw 1993, pp. 83-84.

Operation Vistula

27.1 The Decision

On the day after General Karol Świerczewski's death, that is March 29, 1947, the Polish Worker's Party (PPR) Politburo held a special meeting in Warsaw. Its members wielded full power in Poland, limited at most by the instructions coming from the Kremlin. The meeting was attended by leading PPR activists: Bolesław Bierut, Władysław Gomułka, Stanisław Radkiewicz, and Jakub Berman. Everyone was well aware of the fact that the death of General "Walter" had for the first time made the UPA's activity a political problem. The lack of a decisive reaction, especially when juxtaposed with the ruthless repressions against the Polish underground, could have harmed the level of public support for the communists – it could have contradicted official slogans stating the PPR's commitment to the national interest. It was therefore decided to speed up the displacement operation planned for autumn. The Politburo's meeting minutes read:

as part of the repressive action against the Ukrainian population, it has been decided [...] to rapidly resettle Ukrainians and mixed families to the regained territories (mainly North Prussia), avoiding forming dense groupings and no closer than 100 km to the border¹.

It was decided to coordinate the planned operation with the authorities of the USSR and Czechoslovakia, while the preparation of appropriate displacement plans was entrusted to General Marian Spychalski and Minister Stanisław Radkiewicz. The importance of this decision is evidenced by the fact that at subsequent meetings of the Political Bureau on April 2 and 11, Radkiewicz discussed the status of preparations for the operation.

A detailed operation plan was presented at a meeting of the PPR Politburo on April 16, 1947. It was reviewed by specially-invited Marshal Michał Żymierski, General Stefan Mossor (the intended operation commander), and Władysław Wolski, resettlement plenipotentiary. The "Project of Organization of Special Operation <East>" presented to the PPR leadership had its main emphasis on the displacement of civilians, described in the document as an "evacuation".

¹ Cit. per: *Akcja "Wisła"*..., p. 65.

The plan was to include “all shades of Ukrainian nationality, including the Lemkos, as well as mixed Polish-Ukrainian families”. It was bluntly explained that the purpose of the operation was: “to finally solve the Ukrainian problem in Poland”. The document stated that “simultaneously” with the displacement, an “offensive combat” operation would be carried out against UPA units, which were to be completely exterminated after the “evacuation”². The next day (April 17, 1947), at a meeting of the State Security Commission, it was decided, perhaps under the influence of recommendations from members of the Politburo, to change the operation codename from “East” to “Vistula” and to shift (probably for propaganda purposes) the weight of argumentation in official documents from resettlement to combating the UPA.

Therefore, the resolution of the Presidium of the Council of Ministers adopted on April 24, 1947 stated that due to the “necessity of further normalizing relations in Poland, the issue of UPA bands’ liquidation has fully matured”. Consequently, the Minister of National Defense was instructed to assign “an appropriate number of military units to carry out sweeps in the field and liquidate UPA bands”, while the State Repatriation Office was to organize “resettlement of Ukrainian and mixed populations in areas where the activity of UPA bands could endanger their lives and property”³. In this way, the impression that the main aim of the operation was to destroy the Ukrainian underground was created, while cleverly concealing the reality that it represented another stage in the creation of an ethnically homogeneous communist state.

To execute the operation, a special Operational Group “Vistula” (GO Vistula) was created, which was headed by Brigadier General Stefan Mossor. A pre-war officer and participant of the Polish campaign of 1939, he spent the entire war in a POW camp. After his release he worked in the General Staff of the Polish Army, dealing with combatting “banditism”. GO Vistula consisted of five infantry divisions (the 3rd, 6th, 7th, 8th, and 9th) and the 1st KBW Division. Together with two reserve regiments, soldiers of the WOP, MO and UB functionaries, as well as Railway Security Guards, it amounted to about 21 thousand people. GO Vistula also had at its disposal a squadron of airplanes and four armoured trains.

At that time UPA forces in Poland numbered around 1400-1500 partisans. Together with OUN Security Service officers and armed members of the civilian network, the entire Ukrainian underground numbered about two and a half thousand people (not counting sympathizers). The ratio of Ukrainian to Polish forces was 1:9 in absolute numbers – however, one advantage of Polish forces

² *Ibidem*, p. 93.

³ *Ibidem*, pp. 169-170.

was even more significant: the Polish Army and KBW had greater maneuverability and could easily achieve devastating superiority in any given region at any time. In the first phase of the operation, more than ten thousand soldiers were directed against four UPA sotnias and the SB militia and civilian network in the Bieszczady Mountains (in total no more than five-seven hundred people), supported additionally by the MO, WOP, two armoured trains and air force. This gave a numerical advantage of 1:20 or even 1:25 (which, allegedly, the army never achieved in its fight against the UPA).



Fig. 64 Transport of soldiers of 2nd Brigade, Internal Security Corps in the Bieszczady Mountains during Operation Vistula.

27.2 Displacement of the Populace

The displacement action began on April 28, 1947 at 4 AM. It first covered the districts of Sanok, Lesko, Przemyśl, Brzozów and partly Lubaczów, at the beginning of June gradually spreading to the districts of Jarosław, Lubaczów, Gorlice, Nowy Sącz, Nowy Targ, and even Lublin Province.

Conducting the operation, the army would encircle villages and then inform inhabitants that they were to be resettled. The people were given a few hours to pack their most needed and valuable belongings. Then, under soldier escort, the inhabitants were directed to assembly points. These were often closely guarded pastures surrounded by barbed wire. UB officers would

make selections of the displaced people there, trying to filter out all “unsure elements”. They drew up detailed lists of displaced persons and their property and made efforts to recruit agents; by June 1947 alone, 852 informants were enlisted. People suspected of sympathizing with the underground, if not immediately arrested, were divided into special categories: “A” (noted by the UB), “B” (noted by military reconnaissance), “C” (the transport commander has reservations). Families assigned these categories were to be settled at most per one in any given village. All other Ukrainians were transported far from the state border and located in clusters not exceeding 10 percent of the local population. All this was done so as to quickly assimilate them into the surrounding Polish population.

After selection, the displaced were directed to loading stations, from where they were sent by rail westward. When drawing up transportation lists, inhabitants of single villages were split up and directed to various far-flung locations within the Recovered Territories. The first transport set off on April 29 from the railroad station at Szczawne in the Bieszczady Mountains, and, after a few days’ travel, reached Słupsk on May 3. However, not all transports went so smoothly – in some cases, the trip took up to two weeks. Due to the shortage of wagons, they were often overcrowded. The difficult journey conditions caused the death of at least twenty seven people, mostly the elderly and infants.



Fig. 65 Displacement of Ukrainians conducted in Bieszczady by Polish soldiers during Operation Vistula, 1947.



Fig. 66 Operation Vistula. In the foreground are Polish soldiers. Visible in the background is the village being displaced, Bieszczady 1947.

Poles inconvenient to the communist authorities were also displaced during the operation. In the area of Przemyśl alone, a dozen or so Polish families, “completely rotten (as General Mossor put it) as a result of PSL and NSZ propaganda”⁴, were treated in this way. It is not known how many Poles were affected by the displacements, but it was fewer than initially suggested by the UB. In February 1947, its functionaries even proposed deporting all the inhabitants of the town of Urzędów in the Lublin region (around 7,000 people), “whose mentality was deeply rooted in decidedly reactionary political and social views, if not downright bandit predispositions”, to Masuria⁵.

At unloading stations, local authorities would take over the management of the displaced. However, they possessed too few farmsteads and means of transport to care for them quickly. For this reason, the Ukrainians and Lemkos usually reached their designated places of settlement only after several days. Due to the lack of vacant farms, it was impossible to keep to the rule that the resettlers should not constitute more than 10 percent of the population in a

4 *Ibidem*, p. 225.

5 AIPN, MBP, 1580/75/641, p. 241.

given village. The farms allocated to the resettlers under Operation Vistula were usually dilapidated, neglected, and unsown. Many of them needed complete repairs. There were cases of allocating one farm to several families. In 1956, it was noted that one peasant family of six to ten people in Olsztyn Province had one room at its disposal. A sense of injustice prevailed among the newcomers, especially among the Lemkos who had been, after all, unsympathetic towards the UPA. People applied en masse for permission to return to their place of residence, if not permanently then at least to transport their belongings. As a rule, such requests were rejected given that per instruction the displaced under Operation Vistula were to have limited possibilities of movement.

Despite this, some people tried to return to their abandoned farms on their own. General Mossor ordered that all returnees be detained and immediately sent to the Central Labour Camp in Jaworzno, which between 1947-1948 became a place of confinement of Ukrainians. The decision to set up a "transit camp" for "suspicious Ukrainians" in Jaworzno was made by the PPR Politburo on April 23, 1947. While unmasked members of the underground were immediately handed over to a military court (and usually swiftly executed), the camp in Jaworzno was to accommodate people who were only suspected of having connections to the nationalists. Representatives of the Ukrainian intelligentsia were classified as such in advance, which is why twenty two Greek Catholic and five Orthodox priests, twenty one teachers, two doctors, the manager of an oil mine, and others landed there.

The first Ukrainians arrived at the camp on May 9, 1947. In total, there were almost four thousand people there (the figures vary from 3821 to 3873). Special groups of UB functionaries interrogated them. The investigation carried out by prosecutors of the Institute of National Remembrance for this case concluded:

Officers of the Investigative Group resorted to torturing detainees during interrogations. This consisted of beating and kicking, electrocution, pouring cold water into the mouth and nose, sticking pins into the body, and sitting detainees onto the leg of an overturned stool. Also, Jaworzno Camp operated under an extensive system of extra-legal punishments for even the most minor offences.

As a result of the UB's investigations, 547 people were sent to prison in Kraków and indicted. Yet, despite the cruel interrogation methods used, no links to the underground were discovered among the remaining prisoners. The majority of those imprisoned were simple peasants, sometimes with their entire families. It is worth mentioning here a letter from the head of the Military District Prosecutor's Office in Kraków, Lieutenant Colonel Oskar Karliner, to Major General Mikołaj Prus-Więckowski, commander of Military District V, dated December 1947, who, describing the situation of those imprisoned in the camp, warned:

Among those arrested are Poles, Ukrainians, who after serving for several years in the Red Army [...] returned with decorations, old people, pregnant women, the sick, and minors, without any evidence of guilt, who landed in Jaworzno by chance in the rush of the Operational Groups conducting the displacement. It was found that in some cases, neighbourhood feuds and accusations of collaboration with bands were behind why a given person was sent to the CLC in Jaworzno. The leader of the Investigative Group, Captain Bik, told me of one case where a man was sent to the CLC to deprive him of two photo cameras⁶.

On June 14, 1947, the first Ukrainian prisoner of Jaworzno, Michał Ogarek, a farmer from the village of Czaszyn (Lesko district), died. In autumn of that year, the number of deaths increased due to hunger and poor sanitary conditions. A typhus epidemic broke out, and a total of at least 160 people died in the camp. They were buried in the nearby forest in unmarked graves. Today, a monument unveiled by the presidents of Poland and Ukraine stands at the site.

In December 1947, the first detainees began getting released. They were transferred in special transports to the Recovered Territories under the protection of KBW soldiers, following the displaced families. By March 1948, about three thousand people had been freed. The release of the remaining prisoners continued over the next year. The last group of prisoners, consisting of Greek Catholic priests, was released on March 8, 1949.

Operation Vistula ended on July 31, 1947. Throughout its course, over 140 thousand people were displaced. Comparably to the Poles leaving Lviv or other places in Eastern Galicia, those displaced by the operation were forced to leave the land their families had been cultivating for centuries. Most of them had nothing to do with UPA activities, not to mention the massacres in Volhynia and Eastern Galicia. The forced resettlements also covered areas where the Ukrainian underground had little support, such as the Low Beskids or Podlachia. This indicates the real aim of the operation was to rid the country of issues around its Ukrainian minority. Nothing else could explain the desire to deport the few thousand remaining Ukrainians of Lublin region in autumn of 1947, who, as was admitted, not only had nothing to do with the UPA but had actually “demonstrated their loyalty to Democratic Poland”. It was thus recommended to displace these individuals “carefully” [read: politely – G.M.], allowing them to take most of their belongings. Comparatively, former soldiers of the “people’s” Polish Army were to be transported in “separate transports to the best land plots in Silesia”⁷. It is not clear whether these additional

6 Cit. per: Łukasz Kamiński, *Ukraińcy w COP Jaworzno*, w: *Historia martyrologii więźniów obozów odosobnienia w Jaworznie 1939-1956*, eds. Kazimierz Miroszewski, Zygmunt Woźniczka, Jaworzno 2002, p. 74.

7 AIPN, MBP, 1580/75/641.

deportations actually took place. It is certain, however, that similar additional deportations of Ukrainians were carried out in Nowy Targ and Chełm districts as late as 1950 when the UPA no longer existed in Poland.

27.3 “Constantly Tracking Us ...”. The End of the Ukrainian Underground in Poland

The Polish Army's dominance in Operation Vistula was so evident that the mere appearance of Polish troops somewhere paralyzed any Ukrainian underground activity. The UPA was unable to oppose the displacement in any way. It also faced difficulty maintaining a presence in the field, as searches for partisans began simultaneously with the displacements. Forests were constantly combed, ambushes were organized on probable routes taken by UPA men, and attempts were made to prevent them from entering abandoned villages and collecting leftover food. Vasyl “Orlan” Halasa described those times as follows:

Our main sustenance was potatoes, left in the fields adjacent to displaced villages. However, it was in these fields that the army often set up ambushes. A saying came from that period: “You will get the potatoes, or you will die fighting for them”⁸.

The situation of the UPA partisans is well reflected in their letters intercepted by Polish Army and KBW units. “Zaichyk” (N.N.) wrote: “They are wrapping up the displacement and we are left like Robinson Crusoe”. Another partisan, “Dub” (N.N.), noted: “The Poles are constantly tracking us and it seems like there is no place on earth for us anymore”⁹.

The manhunts first affected the kurin under Vasyl “Ren” Mizernyi. For weeks, the Ukrainian units had maneuvered through the terrain with extraordinary skill, tricking or forcing their way out of successive traps set for them. After several weeks of this “paperchase”, it became clear that the only chance to avoid extermination was to leave Poland. On June 29, 1947, exhausted from heavy fighting against the 1st KBW Division, the combined sotnias under Khrin, Stakh, and Bir (Vasyl Shyshkanynets) broke through into Ukraine near the village of Sianki, where they fought the Soviets for another year. Sotnia-leader Khrin was killed in 1949 in Czechoslovakia while travelling with a group of couriers to the West. The fourth sotnia from Ren's kurin, operating in the Low Beskids, dispersed and its members tried getting through to the West in small

⁸ *Wiele twarzy Ukrainy*. Rozmowy Izy Chruślińskiej i Piotra Tymy, Lublin 2005, p. 189.

⁹ CAW, IV 501.1A, v. 611, pp. 54, 9, 20-21, 59.



Fig. 67 Field patrol of 2nd Brigade, Internal Security Corps, vicinity of Stuposiany in the Bieszczady Mountains.



Fig. 68 Officers of a Przemyśl UPA kurin with representatives of the underground administration, April 1947. Photograph taken by Volodymyr "Burlaka" Shchyhelskyi.

groups. Only a few of them succeeded. Ren followed his men to Ukraine and was killed there in 1949 in combat against the Soviets.

Baida's kurin operating in the Przemyśl Foothills survived May 1947 without major losses. However, the Polish Army's manhunts convinced the OUN and

UPA leadership that it was necessary to try to break through to the West. Halasa issued the appropriate order on May 25, 1947. The first to set off for Germany at the beginning of June was the sotnia of Mykhailo "Hromenko" Duda, a former soldier of the "Nachtigall" battalion. In a brilliantly led expedition, the UPA broke through the lines of Polish and then Czechoslovakian barrage groups and on the night of September 9 crossed the border into Bavaria. "Each of us," Hromenko later wrote, "breathed a sigh of relief ..."10. Three other units commanded by Volodymyr "Burlaka" Shchygelskyi fared worse. They suffered heavy losses in battle against the Polish Army on June 3, 1947 in the Przemyśl Foothills. Eventually, they managed to break through to Czechoslovakia, but once there, had to disperse in the face of constant pursuit. Burlaka surrendered to the Czechoslovakian Army, but was handed over to Poland and executed. Zalizniak's kurin, hiding in various bunkers and hideouts, suffered somewhat fewer losses. However, it was also disbanded in August 1947. Its partisans went to the USSR or the West, some attempting to reach their families. Zalizniak made his way to Slovakia, where he lived peacefully until the 1950s. Recognized, he ended up in Poland and after a famous trial was sentenced to life imprisonment (he was released in 1981).

Berkut's unit survived in the Zamość land until the beginning of September; only then was it disbanded, with the commander himself managing to escape to Germany. According to the GO Vistula General Staff, throughout the operation until July 31, 1509 members of the OUN-B and UPA and 46 soldiers of the WiN were killed or taken prisoner, with personal losses numbering 61 killed and 91 wounded. Despite engaging such considerable forces, a portion of the UPA sotnias managed to break through to the USSR or the West, which should be considered a blunder of the state.

Undoubtedly, Operation Vistula did lead to the liquidation of Ukrainian partisan units. Truth be told, after the operation's end strong UPA groups did remain in the Lublin land, but their further existence lost all meaning. Yaroslav "Stiah" Starukh, now leader of the OUN and UPA underground in Poland, came to just such a conclusion, which is why he ordered the demobilization of Zalizniak's and Berkut's units. However, he did not intend to give up further struggle. According to Stiah's recommendations "A certain small number of people, [...] the strongest and surest, were to remain at their posts and continue their activities"11.

The leaders of the OUN and UPA in Poland, contrary to what is often quoted, were not only alive in August of 1947 (i.e. after the end of Operation

10 Михайло Громенко, *У великому рейді*, Мюнхен 1956, p. 153.

11 State Archive in Rzeszów, Sr 556/48, p. 109, Files on Iron Kudlaichuk.

Vistula), but what is more, did not lose hope for a change in fortunes. The National OUN Provid, although possessing a tattered organizational network, survived the Polish Army roundups in their entirety. This created an opportunity to reconstitute the organizational network. Small, well-embedded groups of the most persistent underground organizers remained in the country (mainly members of the OUN's SB), their task being to operate communication channels between the American occupation zone in Germany and Ukraine. Additionally, they were to fight attempts to settle Poles on abandoned Ukrainian farmsteads.

The authorities of the People's Republic of Poland noticed these threats and, unlike in the years 1945-1946, did not ignore the problem this time. The place of GO Vistula was taken by strong and concurrently manoeuvrable operational groups of the KBW: "Sanok", "Hrubieszów", and "Lubaczów". These KBW units and UB officers would be responsible for the fatal blows to the OUN civilian network. Immediately after the displacement ended, the KBW covered the field with a dense network of patrols and manhunts. Reconnaissance platoons pretending to be UPA partisans often operated in the area. Information obtained from POWs made it possible to learn the structure of the Ukrainian underground and to determine, at least approximately, the location of the OUN leadership's hideouts.



Fig. 69 Interrogation of a group of Ukrainian partisans by a Polish officer of 2nd Brigade, Internal Security Corps.

The first results came soon enough. On September 16, 1947, the bunker of OUN Security Service head Petro “Dalnych” Fedoriv was discovered. Most of his bodyguard was killed, and he, unconscious, fell into Polish hands. On September 17, after several days of round-ups, GO “Lubaczów” surrounded the bunker of National Providnik Stiah in the forest complex near Monastyr village; he, to avoid capture, blew himself up. Two days later, the staff of Technical Center “Vulkan”, which was publishing propaganda materials, was destroyed near Stiah’s hiding place. On March 5, 1948, UB officers arrested UPA commander “Orest”, in Karczewiska near Wrocław. Only “Orlan”, the national propaganda officer, managed to get through to Ukraine (the Soviets did not capture him until 1953). The fight against isolated OUN groups, which waited in vain for liaisons with instructions from HQ, continued until the autumn of 1948 when these too were finally liquidated.



Fig. 70 Interrogation of a captured Banderite, June 1947.

In 1948, UB officers established a provocateur OUN network under their full control. Its task was to thwart any temptations to renew the underground’s activities. It was headed by Leon “Zenon” Łapiński, who until recently had been an OUN leader in the Lublin land. Captured by the UB, he began collaborating

with the communists, proving to be an extremely effective agent. He recruited several dozen unsuspecting people into his provocative network and established contact with the OUN-B in Germany and Ukraine. Thanks to this, the Security Office took control of the OUN's transport routes, gaining the ability to liquidate or arrest selected couriers. In 1951, a group of paratroopers dropped by the British in Sieniawski Forest was destroyed. A courier team put ashore from a submarine in 1952 was also liquidated. In April 1954, the special services of the People's Republic of Poland decided to cease Zenon's operation code-named "C-1". Eighty-six people connected to the network had been arrested.

The captured and imprisoned members of OUN and UPA were treated with the utmost severity. The GO Vistula Military Court alone sentenced 173 members of the underground to death, mostly rank-and-file partisans. All sentences were carried out. Their commanders could hardly count on a better fate. Petro "Dalnych" Fedoriv, the former student of law at Jan Kazimierz University in Lviv, was sentenced to death in January 1950 after a two-year investigation. He was executed on April 11 of that year.

Shortly afterwards, on May 31, Miroslav Onyshkevych was sentenced to death in Warsaw. He was executed on July 6 around 9 PM at Warsaw-Mokotów prison. He remained convinced of the correctness of OUN ideology to the end. In his final defence before the Warsaw court Onyshkevych said:

I do not hide nor am I ashamed of the fact that my political views are distinctly nationalistic. I believed, and still believe today, that the tactics and path I followed in committing myself to the OUN and UPA were good and correct. With the enemies of the Ukrainian people [...] such as the Bolshevik Party and the Soviet Union in general, or with Democratic Poland, there was no other way but the one I chose – that is, armed struggle. I considered this fight to be correct [...] and the deeds I described [...] to be just. Today I am in prison and sick with lung and throat tuberculosis. If I were healthy and managed to escape in any way – I would always consider it my goal to continue this struggle [...]. If I am sentenced to death, I ask that the sentence be carried out immediately so that I will not be mistreated¹².

27.4 Liquidation of the Underground – Yes, Forced Displacement – No

On November 10, 1947, the Ministry of Recovered Territories issued guidelines to provincial offices on how they should deal with Ukrainian settlers. They read:

12 State Archive in Warsaw, Sr 450/50, v. 4, pp. 61-118.

The primary goal of the resettlement of “V” settlers is their assimilation into the new Polish environment, and every effort should be made to achieve this goal. Do not use the term “Ukrainians” in relation to these settlers. If alongside the settlers [...] an intelligentsia element gets through, it will be necessary to place it separately and far away from the villages inhabited by settlers from “V”¹³.

The document adequately reflects the authorities' determination to assimilate the displaced. They forbade or at least restricted the cultivation of Ukrainians' culture, language, and religion: Greek Catholic priests who tried to perform religious services encountered various obstacles, all intended to accelerate Polonization. The UB was assisted in its total control over the displaced by a branched network of collaborators. It was not until April 1952 that the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR) passed a secret resolution in which it was decided to take steps to improve the material situation of the Ukrainian population and to satisfy its cultural and educational needs. Among other things, amateur theatrical and musical groups were permitted to develop in village community centers, and Ukrainian-language magazines from the USSR could appear there too. This was the first sign of the coming changes. In the wake of the post-Stalinist thaw, communist oppression was further eased. While up until 1952 the communist authorities had aimed at the Polonization of Ukrainians, later the goal became a characteristic People's Republic assimilation into the state. Attempts by Ukrainians and Lemkos to return to their former homesteads were still frowned upon and the influences of a broadly defined nationalism were countered, but at the same time, limited opportunities were created in schools to teach the Ukrainian language and satisfy basic cultural needs. In 1956, the authorities even agreed to establish the Ukrainian Socio-Cultural Society.

The change in nationality policy caused the authorities to reflect on the displacement operation. The abandonment of national assimilation in practice meant admitting that the repressions were inappropriate and inflicted unnecessary suffering on many people. As a result, there were suggestions that Operation Vistula should be condemned on the wave of account settling regarding Stalin's “mistakes and distortions”. This issue became the subject of deliberations of the Ministry of Internal Affairs College in June 1956. The starting point of the discussion was a Ministry of Internal Affairs memo from May of that year, in which we read:

13 Cit. per: *Akcja “Wiśła” 1947 (Polska i Ukraina w latach trzydziestych–czterdziestych XX wieku. Nieznane dokumenty z archiwów służb specjalnych*, v. 5, Warsaw–Kyiv 2006, p. 382.

It is necessary to conduct a critical evaluation of Operation "V". According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Operation "V" was unjust and caused irreparable damage. Applying the principle of collective responsibility, foreign to socialism, on an entire segment of the population for the activities of bands and expressing it through the mass application of repressions (forced resettlement), went hand in hand with a serious violation of Leninist principles of nationality policy¹⁴.

Although members of the College agreed that the deportations were a manifestation of discrimination against the Ukrainian population, the proposal to unequivocally condemn them provoked dissenting voices. As Colonel Zbigniew Fijałek put it: "The assessment of the issues presented in the memo means full rehabilitation of the Ukrainian population. I believe it is too early for that in this matter. This issue must be approached with caution"¹⁵. So it was that this point of view ultimately prevailed. From then on, the policy and, almost as importantly, the propaganda of the People's Republic of Poland presented the displacement as a humanitarian operation, an evacuation of a population threatened by the OUN and UPA, and also as the only way of stopping Ukrainian partisan activity. When describing the struggle against the UPA on the territory of present-day Poland, it was invariably suggested that it represented a victorious end to the Kresy battles initiated by the nationalists and just revenge for the wrongs suffered by Poles there. It was even claimed that the UPA units operating in Poland were the same ones that had previously operated in western Ukraine, later forced into Poland by dependable NKVD operational groups. In this way, the leadership of the Polish People's Republic "presented itself" as the first Polish government to "justly" solve the Ukrainian minority issue and concurrently ensure Poles' safety. What the authorities of the Second Polish Republic, Government-in-exile, and Home Army had failed to do, the leaders of the Polish Workers' Party (PPR), soldiers of the "people's" Polish Army, and Internal Security Corps (KBW) had allegedly resolved efficiently and humanely.

These propaganda schemes have deeply corrupted Polish historical consciousness. That is why we should appreciate the courage of the representatives of the first freely elected senate who, on August 3, 1990, going against entrenched views, adopted a resolution on the expulsions of Ukrainians and Lemkos. This resolution directly and truthfully stated:

The Senate of the Republic of Poland condemns Operation Vistula, which applied, typically for totalitarian systems, the principle of collective responsibility.

14 *Ibidem*, pp. 761-763.

15 *Ibidem*, p. 771.

An Attempt at Taking Stock: “War within a War”, Genocide, Stalinist Ethnic Cleansing

28.1 Chronology and Balance Sheet of Victims

The analysis of the presented events shows that the open Polish-Ukrainian conflict in 1943-1947 was split into two distinct phases. The first lasted from February 1943 to spring 1945 and was connected to OUN-B and UPA attempts to “remove” all Poles from lands considered by the members of these organizations to be ethnically Ukrainian. The second phase, partly overlapping with the first chronologically, began in the autumn of 1944 with the first deportations of Poles and Ukrainians and ended in 1947 with Operation Vistula and the subsequent destruction of the OUN underground in Poland.

In the first phase of the conflict, all Polish underground organizations fought the Ukrainians. At that time, the mere fact of belonging to a particular ethnic community often meant taking sides. It was not uncommon to be killed just for being Polish or Ukrainian, as was most evident in Volhynia, where all persons with Polish roots were murdered mercilessly.

The second phase of the conflict was of a different nature. In the face of a common enemy – the communists – the AK-WiN, OUN-B, and UPA concluded several local non-aggression agreements and engaged in limited cooperation. From then on, the UPA was combated by the authorities of “new Poland” and the national underground, which limited itself to several pacifications. While the first phase of the conflict was overshadowed by the anti-Polish purges carried out by the OUN-B, the second phase of the conflict was driven by Soviet and Polish communist party guidelines, which firmly implemented the plan to create an ethnically homogenous Poland and a western Ukraine “cleansed” of Poles. If Ukrainian nationalists murdered mixed-race families for being “unreliable” between 1943-1944, then the Polish communists forcibly expelled such couplings in 1947 during Operation Vistula for similar reasons.

It is not easy to put a figure on the number of people who fell victim to all these events. Here is not the place to discuss the rich literature on the subject and the interesting discussion accompanying the disputes around it. Let us point out that the largest number of Poles died in Volhynia. According to the findings of Władysław and Ewa Siemaszko, at least 33 thousand Poles died in

this region in 1943, of whom about 19 thousand are known by name¹. The total number of those killed at the hands of the Ukrainian nationalists may range from 40 to even 60 thousand people. In Eastern Galicia, estimates of 30-40 thousand Polish victims seem realistic, while 6-8 thousand Poles died in what is now Poland.

In light of the numbers cited, it seems that the Polish losses resulting from UPA actions probably amounted to about 100,000 dead (probably a bit less, and no more than 100,000). Any higher figures – 150 or even 200 thousand victims – are not confirmed by any serious academic research and their frequent citing in the media can likely only be explained by a desire to sensationalize the issue.

Let us note that the vast majority of Polish victims perished before the agreements made between the Home Army-WiN and UPA in the spring of 1945 (about 3 thousand people died at the hands of the Ukrainian underground in Poland between the meeting near Ruda Różaniecka and the end of 1947, mostly soldiers of the Polish Army, WOP, and KBW). This shows how important the first stage of the conflict is for Polish historical memory.

Much controversy surrounds the assessment of Ukrainian losses. Ten years ago, probably as the first Polish historian to do so, I tried making an estimate. To the best of my knowledge at the time, I concluded that 15-20 thousand Ukrainians died as a result of Polish actions. Today, in light of the most recent data, I would be inclined to slightly lower the number of Ukrainian victims. Probably 2 to 3 thousand Ukrainians died at Polish hands in Volhynia (not counting those killed by the auxiliary police). In Eastern Galicia 1-2 thousand Ukrainians were killed. The situation was completely different in the lands of present-day Poland. More Ukrainians than Poles died there between 1943-1947, most probably 8-10 thousand (3-4 thousand up to the summer of 1944, another 5-6 thousand in the period 1944-1947). In total, this would give a figure of 10-11 thousand to 15 thousand dead. In this case, too, providing higher numbers has no basis in academic research. Let us emphasize clearly – the numbers of 30, 50, or even 70 thousand Ukrainians killed found in Ukrainian textbooks are simply taken out of thin air.

This does not change the fact that the majority of Ukrainian victims – as on the Polish side – were civilians, including, not infrequently, women and children. Polish operations against Ukrainian civilians should normally cause considerable embarrassment, but they pale in comparison to losses suffered by the Poles. In Volhynia, the ratio of losses is simply dumbfounding: on the Polish

1 Władysław Siemaszko, Ewa Siemaszko, *Ludobójstwo ...*, pp. 1038, 1040, 1045, 1056.

side, there were perhaps as many as 60,000 victims, on the Ukrainian side, no more than 2-3 thousand.

The balance sheet of suffering brought to bear by the Polish-Ukrainian conflict of 1943-1947 by no means closes on the number of fatalities. We must not forget the approximately 1.1 million Poles and 630,000 Ukrainians and Lemkos who were forced to abandon their "little homelands" and the heritage their families had built up over centuries. They all left their homes with a sense of undeserved injustice and suffered many humiliations along the way.

These numbers illustrate what an important fragment of Polish and Ukrainian history we are dealing with. For comparison: during the Polish-Ukrainian War of 1918-1919, some 10,000 Poles and 15,000 Ukrainians died, and thousands were expelled from their homes. It should come as no surprise, then, that the issues surrounding Polish-Ukrainian relations in World War II and the first years after its end arouse so much emotion, constantly resurfacing in public and political debates.

An important discussion among historians concerns the language used to describe what occurred between Poles and Ukrainians in 1943-1947. Various terms are used: "Polish-Ukrainian conflict", "fratricidal civil war", "OUN-B and UPA's anti-Polish operation", and finally "ethnic cleansing" and "genocide". All prove useful when using them we attempt to describe and understand the reality of that time. "Conflict" because there was obvious Polish-Ukrainian antagonism and struggle for land at the time. "Civil war", because a portion of the Second Republic's citizens acted out against fellow countrymen. "Anti-Polish operation", on the other hand, is a self-designation, used by Ukrainian partisans to describe activities targeting Polish populations. In UPA documents, the term often appears as the equivalent of a codename, a term analogous to, for example, "Operation Vistula". Furthermore, "ethnic cleansing" and "genocide" seem to adequately reflect the nature and legal qualification of the events of that time. All these terms, however, reveal their weaknesses when the people who use them try not so much to describe the phenomenon under investigation as to confine it within a rigid framework of definitions, aiming to justify the crimes or, conversely, to expose them in such a way that any attempt to reflect on the tragic past becomes an attempt to relativize an unforgivable evil.

28.2 Were the Volhynian and Galician Massacres Genocide?

Perhaps the most controversial issue is whether the OUN-B and UPA anti-Polish operations can be classified as genocide. The term was coined and introduced into international law in 1948 by Raphael Lemkin, a Polish lawyer of

Jewish descent, who even before World War II, shocked by information about the murder of over a million Armenians in 1915, became interested in the issue of mass crimes against civilians. The atrocities committed by the Nazis led him to introduce the term “genocide” into international law to describe crimes aiming at the annihilation of a nation (created by adding the suffix -cide to the Greek word *genos*, meaning “people” or “race”, derived from the Latin word *caedere*, meaning “to kill”). The term was finally accepted in 1948 by the UN General Assembly. The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, adopted on December 9, 1948, defined this crime as an act “committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such”. The categories of genocide came to include: murder; causing serious harm to the physical or mental health of members of a group; intentionally creating living conditions that serve to destroy; restricting births and abducting children to give to another community.

Most Polish historians today believe that the murders committed by the OUN-B and UPA bear the hallmarks of genocide (Professor Ryszard Szawłowski expands on this view in an interesting, but also controversial way). Perhaps only Konstanty Gebert (Dawid Warszawski), a prominent journalist who frequently raises the issue of human rights violations, has presented a different point of view. In an interesting article published in the weekly “Polityka” he writes:

So how do the Volhynian massacres look in [...] light [of the definition of genocide – G.M.]? [...] Here too the facts don't meet the definition. The aim of the Ukrainian nationalists was not to murder “in whole or in part” all Poles, not even all Poles in Volhynia. The mass murders were a tool for carrying out their criminal policy, not an end in themselves. Their organizers were concerned with driving Poles out of ethnically mixed lands; they were completely unconcerned that some Poles would live on somewhere inside the future cordon. It was classic ethnic cleansing. This crime, in turn, does not meet another criterion included in the definition, namely, the exterminatory intent of the mass murderers. It was not genocide².

The term “ethnic cleansing” as used by Gebert is often contrasted with “genocide”. Ethnic cleansing refers to actions aimed at expelling a population from a given territory and destroying the material traces of its remains. Such “cleansing” may – but need not – be accompanied by crimes against the civilian population. One of the first to recognize UPA crimes as ethnic cleansing was American historian Timothy Snyder in his interesting book “The Reconstruction

2 Dawid Warszawski (Konstanty Gebert), *Nazywanie nieszczęścia*, “Polityka” no. 45, 7 November 2009.

of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569-1999", without, however, deliberating whether the term excludes "genocide". This approach has been well received by some Ukrainian historians, probably because it makes it possible to some extent to avoid discussion on how to legally classify the Volhynian and Galician massacres.

He points out that the definition of ethnic cleansing is met not only by the events in Volhynia and Galicia but also by the deportations of 1944-1946 and Operation Vistula. However, it is difficult to see any justification for placing an equal sign between these historical phenomena. After all, it is clear that mass murder of civilians was inherent to UPA activities, while the displacements of Ukrainian and Polish populations, however brutal they were, were an exception rather than the rule.

It is not difficult to see that the boundary between the concept of "ethnic cleansing" and "genocide" is quite fluid. It is not clear from which point in time the massacres of civilians that accompanied the cleansing can be considered genocide. According to some scholars, the number of victims should have a decisive impact on the legal assessment of the act. The crimes against Armenians would be genocide because of the enormous number of people murdered (1-1.5 million). However, the adoption of such a position raises moral and legal questions: how and by whom should the number of victims be decreed as a starting point for genocide? One Yugoslav general used this very argument of casualty numbers when defending himself against the accusation that purges carried out by his troops against Muslim inhabitants of Bosnia during the 1991-1995 war were genocidal. Though his subordinates had killed "only" a few thousand Bosnians, the court did eventually find him guilty of this crime ...

Returning to Gebert's text, it should be noted that the argumentation he presents is based on erroneous historical premises in one aspect: he is wrong in stating that there was no plan to exterminate Poles. An analysis of known Ukrainian nationalist documents leaves no doubt that in Volhynia, by spring of 1943 at the latest, it was decided to exterminate all Poles living there. Moreover, each earlier plan for the expulsion of Polish populations from lands considered to be Ukrainian assumed the murder of smaller or larger portions of them. Thus, the killing of the civilian population was also an element of operations to expel, under threat of death, Poles from Eastern Galicia as well as from parts of the Lublin and Subcarpathian regions.

It is doubtful, however, that the OUN-B and UPA were concerned with killing Poles "as such" or as a group threatening the incorporation of Volhynia and other lands into a future Ukraine. From the nationalists' point of view, the anti-Polish operation was directed against Ukraine's "occupiers". The

murder of Poles was therefore not a goal, but a means leading to the creation of a mono-ethnic Ukrainian state. But does that change the legal qualification of the act? According to the Banderites, “Polish occupiers” were not only soldiers of the Polish underground but all Poles, including infants. In addition, if adhering to this legal formula, we cannot help but notice that Turks also killed Armenians out of fear that the Armenians would tear the lands they inhabited away from the state. Similarly, in Rwanda, the Tutsis and Hutus in 1994 (when some 800,000 Tutsis were slaughtered over several months) were divided by disputes over land and state power.

As Konstanty Gebert himself admits, an important argument in favour of recognizing the Volhynian massacre as genocide is, however, the judgments of the International Criminal Court concerning crimes committed during the war in former Yugoslavia. First of all, we have the example of the massacre in Srebrenica, where Serbs murdered 8 thousand Muslims in 1995 (also due to a territorial dispute), and which was recognized by the ICC as a crime of genocide.

The investigative department of the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN), which leads inquiries into the Volhynian war crimes, refers specifically to the ICC judgments. In the legal opinion of prosecutor Piotr Zając we read:

It is irrelevant [...] whether the perpetrator intended through his conduct to achieve another, additional goal (for example, obtaining ethnically “pure” territories). To be more precise, legal-penal consequences of intentionality may affect the perpetrator not only if the criminal act is itself an end but also if it is a means to achieve that intended end. With regards to the Volhynian crimes that interest us, the murder of the Polish population was not an end in and of itself, but rather a means to obtain an ethnically homogenous territory and, in the opinion of Ukrainian nationalists, a condition sine qua non for the creation of an independent Ukraine. This line of interpretation of the provisions defining the crime of genocide is also evident in the past activities of the criminal tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda. In the indictments against Radovan Karadžić and Ratko Mladić submitted to the Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, they were charged, among other things, with the crime of genocide [...]. For the Serbian leadership striving to create a great nation-state, ethnic cleansing was only a means to an end. However, the prosecution did not doubt that by initiating the slaughter of Croats and Muslims in particular, they had committed the crime of genocide³.

3 Piotr Zając, *Prześladowania ludności narodowości polskiej na terenie Wołynia w latach 1939-1945 – ocena karnoprawna zdarzeń w oparciu o ustalenia śledztwa OKŚZPNP w Lublinie*, in: *Zbrodnie przeszłości. Opracowania i materiały prokuratorów IPN*, v. 2, Ludobójstwo, Warsaw 2008, p. 44.

The conclusions reached by Piotr Zając seem to be fully correct. With one reservation, mind you. In the case of the Volhynian massacres, it would be more appropriate to refer to the crimes committed against the Tutsis in Rwanda. There are many similarities between the situation of the Poles in Volhynia and the Tutsis in the "land of a thousand hills". For many years the privileged Poles/Tutsi, a minority, were cruelly massacred with edged weapons (axes/machetes) by their neighbours the Ukrainians/Hutus, who feared their return to power. Both in Volhynia and Rwanda, the aim was to kill all individuals of the group condemned to extermination. The ICC judgments concerning the situation in the former Yugoslavia seem to apply more to the Galicia massacre. In this case, the aim was to expel Poles under threat of death. The example of genocide in Srebrenica cited by Gebert should therefore be compared with the crimes in Pidkamin, Derzhiv, Baligród, or Ihrovytsia.

It is my conviction that the terms "ethnic cleansing" and "genocide" should not be treated as mutually exclusive, but as mutually complementary or overlapping, at least occasionally. In other words, I believe that although the anti-Polish operation constitutes ethnic cleansing, it also meets the definition of genocide. One could say that the Volhynian and Galician massacres were "genocidal ethnic cleansing". It is worth noting that in the literature on the subject the terms are often used interchangeably. A good example of this is the UN Assembly resolution of 18 December 1992, where reference is made to "punishment for the criminal policy of 'ethnic cleansing', which is a form of genocide"⁴.

Another possible way of distinguishing the two phenomena would be to deem ethnic cleansing those cases of population removal that were not accompanied by actions aimed at their physical annihilation. Then the Volhynian and Galician massacres would be genocide, while the forced relocations of 1944-1946 and 1947 would be "merely" ethnic cleansing. Recognizing that the anti-Polish operations meet the criteria of the UN Convention on Genocide should be evident through the criminal tribunals' sentencing practices, which as an act of genocide, i.e. a policy of physical annihilation of an ethnic group, deemed all crimes in which the perpetrators intended to bring about the non-existence of a selected national, ethnic, or religious group in a given territory, with the question of whether the perpetrators had in mind the whole country, a region, or only a particular locality having secondary importance.

However, Professor Ryszard Szawłowski's proposal to consider the UPA's actions a genocide "superior" in terms of cruelty to the German- and Soviet-orchestrated ones raises doubts. This is not at all because they were not barbaric in their own right: this would force us to tacitly acknowledge that the

4 Cit. per: Bernard Bruneteau, *Wiek ludobójstwa*, Warsaw 2005, p. 171.

murder of Ukrainian peasants by starvation in the Great Famine of 1932-1933 or the expulsion into the desert and death for lack of food and water of the dark-skinned Herero people in Namibia by the Germans in 1904 were more humane. Still, the murder of the Polish population with axes and spades was a genocide that was indeed cruel, but also, and perhaps above all, primitive. Perhaps it is precisely this primitiveness of the means used that distinguishes the Volhynian and Galician massacres (alongside the crimes committed against the Tutsis) from the “modern” genocides, whose organizers and decision-makers, concerned for the well-being of the direct perpetrators, applied Zyklon B or created such working and living conditions that the “problem” solved itself.

28.3 How to Evaluate Polish Retaliation and Operation Vistula

The practice of recognizing as a crime of genocide any killing where the criminal act was committed with the intention of bringing about the non-existence of a disliked national or ethnic group in a given territory seems most reasonable. However, this has its legal consequences when also evaluating Polish reprisal operations. As a result of Polish underground activities, it was not uncommon for civilians, including women and children, to die. Although the number of Ukrainian losses amounts to 10-15 percent of Polish losses, many of the retaliatory actions cannot be justified, as they affected innocent and defenceless people, and some of them may even bear traces of genocide. This is the conclusion of the “Information on the final findings of investigation S 28/02/Zi on the killing of 79 individuals – residents of Bielsk Podlaski district, including 30 so-called carters in the forest near Puchały Stare, in the period between January 29, 1946, and February 2, 1946”, prepared by the investigation department of the IPN. Several dozen Orthodox Belarusians fell victim to this crime. They were killed by a unit of the Polish national underground for their national and religious affiliation. After analyzing the available evidence, the IPN employees concluded that “murders of carters and village pacifications [...] cannot be used in a struggle for the independent existence of the state, as they bear the hallmarks of genocide [...]. Therefore, no circumstance permits one to consider what took place as rightful”.

The tragic events in the Bielsk Podlaski district in some ways resemble the pacifications that took place in certain Ukrainian villages, like Wierzchowiny, where the NSZ killed almost two hundred Ukrainians in June 1945. Here, too, the perpetrators’ intent (though not explicitly expressed) was to rid the Lublin region of its Orthodox population (although in this case of Ukrainian origin). The operation cannot be explained by the actions of the UPA, as its units

were not stationed in Wierzychowiny. Of course, its inhabitants did have pro-communist sympathies, but the NSZ soldiers did not limit themselves to only killing PPR members (as in villages where Poles lived) but also killed anyone they considered Ukrainian. A careful analysis of this pacification may lead to the conclusion that the crimes committed were similar. It seems that the murders committed by Volyniak's unit in Leżajsk and Piskorowice also bear semblance to genocide.

It should be noted at once, however, that each Polish retaliatory action requires separate and careful study, as each was of a different nature and cause. The legal (though, of course, not ethical) classification of executions of random Ukrainians that took place at the beginning of 1944 in Lviv province (for example, in Blyshchyvody or Soroky near Stare Selo) seems to be different. The immediate cause of these crimes was the desire to exact bloody revenge for earlier attacks on Poles. Although these acts, too, deserve moral condemnation, they rather "only" amount to war crimes.

Yet, we must stress: an unambiguous critical assessment of Polish operations against the Ukrainian civilian population cannot in any way mean that an equal sign should be placed between the planned extermination of Poles in Volhynia/Eastern Galicia and local reprisals. The research shows that Home Army command tried limiting retaliatory actions to an absolute minimum, if only for the negative reaction in international opinion. The leadership of the OUN-B and UPA acted differently: it strove for the complete elimination of Poles in all lands they considered Ukrainian, from the very beginning including mass crimes against defenceless populations in their operations. On the Ukrainian side, therefore, we deal with a top-down operation to "cleanse" areas of an unwanted national group, while on the Polish side we have initiatives by local commanders spurred by various motives (often simply blind desire to take revenge). In other words, on the Ukrainian side, the entire anti-Polish operation was genocidal, while on the Polish side actions amounted to individual pacifications.

A separate issue is the evaluation of Operation Vistula. Contrary to the widely held view in Poland, carrying out a complete population displacement to destroy the underground was unnecessary. If it had been possible to eliminate Polish partisan units in the Białystok, Mazovia, and Lublin regions without resorting to such a measure, it was not necessary for destroying the OUN and UPA either. Forced displacement was carried out not because it was the only method to combat the UPA, but because it was the simplest and easiest one to implement. That thousands of innocent people suffered through such an operation was of no importance to the Stalinist authorities, who used terror against their own people. Treating all the displaced as potential underground

collaborators was a clear application of collective responsibility. It was not even a matter of depriving families of their property, since this loss was compensated in one way or another in the western and northern territories (to this effect, current demands for the return of former farms, except for those who refused help from the state, are not only difficult to implement but also debatable), but rather of restricting the basic human right to choose one's place of residence plus the accompanying atmosphere of terror and intimidation. The fact that the forced resettlements occurred based on a decision of the Political Bureau of the PPR fully justifies recognizing Operation Vistula as at the least a typical communist crime (as per the Law on the IPN).

Perhaps, though, we are dealing with an even more serious matter. To this day, the question remains unresolved as to whether the communists, by resettling the Ukrainians in the western territories, intended only to prevent the resurgence of the underground, or whether they also intended in this way to deprive the Ukrainians of their national identity. It seems at least plausible that between 1947 and 1952 Poland's rulers, striving to create an ethnically homogenous state, decided to forcibly Polonize, among others, the Ukrainian minority. Although displacements were not necessary to destroy the UPA, the activities of the Ukrainian underground convinced the PPR organizers that without population transfers, a certain group of people considering itself Ukrainian and Lemko would persist in Poland. By resettling them throughout the country, the intent was to make them renounce, sooner or later, their ethnic identity. It is only under this assumption that such extensive displacements of a civilian population, involving tens of thousands of people who were often obviously not affiliated with the partisans and sometimes even sympathized with the authorities, can be considered purposeful. This operation of the national assimilation of Ukrainians and Lemkos was prudently "hidden" behind anti-partisan actions to garner full social acceptance for it. The latter was easier to achieve, as the necessity to conduct a national assimilation policy towards minorities had been openly stated by National Democracy activists for a long time. If this hypothesis is true, we would be dealing with an attempt by PPR members to commit so-called ethnocide – a term referring to cases "when a group disappears culturally and linguistically, without mass extermination but only as a result of 'civilizational barbarism'"⁵.

Regardless of whether we consider Operation Vistula a communist crime or an attempt at ethnocide, it was undoubtedly carried out on the orders of the communist politburo and took place at the time of progressing Stalinization of Poland. Therefore, it is surprising that today it still finds defenders who

5 *Ibidem*, p. 22.

consider its carrying out fully justified or even an “ethical imperative”. Such people are thus unwarrantedly placing an equal sign between the OUN-B and UPA whose activities the authorities were in fact obliged to stop, and all Polish citizens of Ukrainian ethnicity assumed disloyal from the outset. They fail to notice that in attempting to justify the forced displacements of 1947, they come dangerously close to relativizing communist crimes.

28.4 The Polish-Ukrainian Conflict over Memory

The events of 1943-1947 cast a shadow over Polish-Ukrainian relations to this day. A careful look at works on this issue fills one with pessimism. Most Ukrainian publications, by no means written by nationalists, paint a picture quite distant from that of Polish researchers. Ukrainian authors are eager to talk about the causes of the massacre, which they consider to be the erroneous nationality policy of the Second Polish Republic and the Polish underground’s unwillingness to accept the independence aspirations of the Ukrainians. In assessing the Polish-Ukrainian conflict during the war, they believe that the years 1943-1944 in Volhynia and Eastern Galicia were marked by a bloody, cruel war between Poles and Ukrainians, with civilians from both nations suffering as a result, the number of victims being of secondary importance. In 1943, therefore, we had a war in which both sides committed numerous and essentially comparable crimes.

This view is well illustrated by the words of Mykhailo Koval, an employee of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine (NANU) and recognized scholar of World War II history, far from being a UPA sympathizer. His book on the fate of Ukraine during World War II, published in the popular series “Ukraina kriz viku” can be perceived as the NANU’s informal position on the matter. In it we read:

One of the main targets of attacks by the UPA became the partisan units of the Home Army [...]. The OUN-men made attempts to forcibly deport Poles from western Ukrainian lands [...]. No less than 40,000 Poles – children, women, the elderly – and approximately the same number of Ukrainians (some authors speak of 60-80,000 for both sides) died in the mutual terrorist operations⁶.

6 Михайло Коваль, *Україна в Другій світовій і Великій Вітчизняній війнах (1939-1945 рр.)*, Київ 1999, p. 153.

This view of Polish-Ukrainian relations during the war is dominant among Ukrainian scholars, and, as I believe, also unofficially sets the course for state historical policy.

There is also growing radicalism in views of the common past on the Polish side, where interpretations of the conflict created by so-called national-Kresy circles and supported by some historians and journalists are gaining public acceptance. Accordingly, the ideology of integral nationalism that assumed the creation of an ethnically homogeneous Ukrainian state should be considered as almost the sole cause behind OUN-B and UPA actions. Thus, the anti-Polish operations in Volhynia and Eastern Galicia manifested through the desire of its fanatical adherents, socially alienated and constituting a margin of Ukrainian society, to put this ideology into practice. The genocide was only halted by Operation Vistula, fully understandable and justified as were the isolated incidents of Polish retaliation that had occurred earlier. The supporters of this interpretation ignore the influence of the Second Polish Republic's policy on Ukrainian attitudes, because, in their view, discrimination against Ukrainians, "if it existed", was "something marginal". They also believe that the anti-Polish operation of the UPA in Volhynia and Eastern Galicia should be contrasted with the crimes committed by Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. It constituted a "third genocide", even "surpassing" the genocidal actions of the Nazis and communists. By this logic, any use of terms like "conflict" or "anti-Polish operation" is a relativization of the crimes committed by Ukrainian partisans, and the only acceptable term that should and can exist in scholarly and public discourse is genocide.

As one may see, Poles and Ukrainians hold two almost radically different positions when it comes to evaluating the historical events of that time. At the same time, we are dealing with a simplification of reality on both sides. It is not difficult to see that the Ukrainian interpretation of those events has been constructed in such a way as to avoid an unambiguous assessment of the actions of the Banderites. The emphasis on the fight against the Home Army creates the impression that the guerrilla war in Volhynia and Eastern Galicia was an equal affair, and that only villages defended by strong, armed forces were pacified. Although it is acknowledged that innocent Polish populations suffered as a result of UPA actions, this information is immediately counterbalanced with words about the murder of innocent Ukrainians. Additionally, since Polish authorities were so unyielding towards Ukrainians, the Poles actually only bore the costs of their own policy. This not only places the actions of the Home Army and UPA on equal footing but also, and more importantly, distorts the nature of the events in Volhynia and Eastern Galicia. After all, the Ukrainian reader will by no means be able to tell from such a narrative that it

was the UPA that carried out ethnic cleansing on an imposing scale and in an extremely bloody manner.

Unfortunately, on the Ukrainian side, Polish assessments of the UPA's anti-Polish operations are often considered a sign of bias. Thus, instead of discussing the legal classification of the Volhynian and Galician massacres, we may encounter the assumption that anyone advocating their recognition as genocide is averse to Ukraine and dialogue, infected by anti-Ukrainian stereotypes, or has simply succumbed to blackmail from Polish national-Kresy circles.

However, similar simplifications can also be seen in the image created by Kresy circles. By equating OUN and UPA members with Nazis and Soviets, they create the impression that some kind of external invasion and Ukrainian occupation of the Kresy had taken place. Yet, regardless of how one judges the actions of the OUN and UPA, its organizers were citizens of the Second Polish Republic who acted against fellow Polish citizens, and not invaders carrying out brutal external aggression. The Third Reich and the USSR were subjects of international law, while the OUN was a secret terrorist organization. The ruthless occupational policies of the Germans and Soviets were aimed at enslaving all of Poland. Poles and Ukrainians, in turn, were divided by a dispute over future borders. Lastly, in the eyes of the Ukrainian nationalists, the Poles were despised occupiers, while to the Nazis they were racially inferior subhumans whom they intended to turn, after murdering their intelligentsia, into a nation of slaves. To the Soviets, on the other hand, they were "Polish masters" who had to be destroyed or "re-socialized".

Focusing attention on the ideology of integral nationalism, in turn, removes from the Polish participants in the discussion the need to account for the failed national policy of the Second Polish Republic. The juxtaposition of the term "genocide" with all other terms used to describe the events of the time, however, fails to acknowledge that all Poles and Ukrainians living in Volhynia and Eastern Galicia were deeply involved in a conflict over the future statehood of, conventionally speaking, Lviv and Drohobych. Similarly, claims about the social alienation of nationalists are used by Polish authors to create a narrative that completely misses the point that they expressed the hopes and pain of thousands of western Ukrainians (especially during Stalin's repression of the Ukrainian SSR in 1944-1953) who dreamed of creating their own state. One might even get the impression that such efforts aim to put an equal sign between crimes against Poles and any Ukrainian attempts at independence.

If we hope to describe what happened during the Second World War between Poles and Ukrainians in line with reality, we must use both the term "genocide" and "armed conflict". Between 1943-1945, a "war within a war" took place: the Polish-Western Ukrainian war of World War II. It can be seen as an

attempt by Ukrainians to “make amends” for the consequences of defeat in the armed conflict of 1918-1919, though its beginning is marked by the massacres carried out by the OUN-B and UPA in Volhynia. The Ukrainian nationalists, realizing their own weakness and concurrently recognizing the use of violence and terror as an inherent part of politics, decided to resolve their national Gordian Knot in Volhynia and Eastern Galicia through a genocidal anti-Polish operation. Naturally, the open conflict between the Polish and Ukrainian underground led to many armed clashes and even, as in the Lublin land, the creation of an informal front line, though this must not obscure the fact that the vast majority of massacres were committed against a defenceless population that in no way threatened the Ukrainian insurgency. In the statement: “a Polish-Ukrainian conflict took place during which a genocidal anti-Polish operation was carried out”, both its first and second elements are of importance. Let us note that there is no relativism in such a statement – after all, in the case of the genocide of the Tutsis, we were simultaneously dealing with a war of the Rwandan Patriotic Front against the official Hutu-dominated Rwandan government.

If one looks for analogies to the actions of the OUN, one should look not at the actions of the Germans and Soviets, but earlier relations between Croats and Serbs. Without a doubt, the Croatian Ustashe were in many ways similar to the members of the OUN. Moreover, how the Croatian government of Ante Pavelić dealt with Serbs was very similar to the policy plans concerning Poles prepared for Yaroslav Stetsko’s government.

The second phase of the conflict passed by in the shadow of Stalin’s ethnic cleansing. In 1944-1946, this affected, on the one hand, Poles expelled from Volhynia and Eastern Galicia and, on the other, Ukrainians and Lemkos forcibly deported from the lands of present-day Poland. In 1947, another ethnic cleansing took place, with the remaining Ukrainian and Lemko minorities being displaced to Poland’s western and northern territories. The displacements carried out by Stalin (and in the case of Operation Vistula also by Bierut and Gomułka) were part of a great reconstruction of Central Europe in Soviet fashion. They would have taken place independently of the Banderite operations, though they probably would not have been as extensive.

In today’s Polish-Ukrainian disputes over the past, both Poles and Ukrainians have a lesson to learn. It is a just right of Ukrainians to respect the memory of those who fought for the freedom of their homeland. However, it is worthwhile they take the trouble to answer one question: is every method of struggle justified in the fight for independence? Or was Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytskyi perhaps correct when, after one of the assassinations, he stated during a sermon: “One does not serve the nation through criminal acts”?

On the other hand, Poles have the right – indeed, the moral duty – to honour the victims of the Volhynian and Galician massacres. This tragic fragment of Polish history and one of the bloodiest episodes of World War II must also find its proper place in school textbooks. However, this should not be accompanied by putting out of memory those bad events that took place with the active role of Poles.

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Illustration Sources

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