



# The Polish-Ukrainian War, 1943-1947

Volodymyr Viatrovych's *Second Polish-Ukrainian War*

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In 2012 Volodymyr Viatrovykh published a controversial work on the Polish-Ukrainian conflict during the Second World War. In the same year, the book was discussed in a special issue of *Ab Imperio* for which Sofia Grachova, Ihor Iliushyn, Grzegorz Motyka, Per Anders Rudling and Andrzej Zięmba offered reviews (see “Forum. Volodymyr Viatrovykh”). Recently, Viatrovykh published another volume on the issue, *Za lashtunkamy “Volyni-43”: Nevidoma polsko-ukrainska viina* (Behind the Scenes of “Volyn 43”: the Unknown Polish-Ukrainian War, 2016). The Polish parliament recognized the events in Volhynia as a genocide on 22 July, when it passed a resolution “in memory of the victims of genocide ... committed by Ukrainian nationalists from 1943-1945, who murdered over 100,000 inhabitants of the Second Polish Republic” (“Sejm przyjął uchwałę” 2016). In response, on 25 August ninety prominent Ukrainian intellectuals and politicians called upon the Verkhovna Rada (Ukrainian parliament) to establish three remembrance day for Ukrainian victims of crimes committed by Poles (klikushin 2016). Since then a Polish film entitled *Wołyń* dealing with the massacres of 1943 has been produced.<sup>1</sup> Viatrovykh’s book has played a prominent role in discussions of the Volhynian events of 1943-44, both in the scholarly press and on the internet.<sup>2</sup> This paper offers an analysis of the text in the light of critical commentary.

Viatrovykh first became a household name in 2002 when he joined the Institute for the Study of the Liberation Movement (TsDVR) and promoted a heroic narrative of the OUN-UPA. He was appointed the organization’s director in 2006, and then in 2008 President Viktor Yushchenko also made him head of the State Archives at the Security Service of Ukraine’s (HDASBU). During Yushchenko’s presidency the heroic narrative became more prominent: streets were renamed in honour of OUN and UPA leaders, and Stepan Bandera was named a “Hero of Ukraine.” Viatrovykh has lent his support to this campaign and has frequently been quoted in the media. In an article from 2010 he argued: “The struggle of Ukrainians for independence is one of the cornerstones of our national self-identification. Therefore without the UPA, without Bandera, without [Roman] Shukhevych there would not be a contemporary Ukrainian state, there would not be a contemporary Ukrainian nation. The fundamental values of the Ukrainian movement, expressed in the manifesto of the OUN under the leadership of Stepan Bandera in December 1940 in the slogan ‘Freedom for nations! Freedom for the individual!’ are values on which the contemporary united Europe rests” (Viatrovykh 2010). After Yushchenko lost the presidency in 2010, Viatrovykh spent a short time as a research fellow at the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute (HURI). He continued publishing articles. Shortly after the Maidan Revolution, in March 2014, he was appointed Head of the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory.

1 For a review see Lewis 2016. “For a Ukrainian reaction to the politicization of issues in this film see Vynnychuk 2016.

2 For recent examples, see Cohen 2016, Coynash 2016a, Coynash 2016b, Motyl 2016, Shchur 2016, Portnikov 2016, Riabenko 2016.

His most controversial and important text is *Druha polsko-ukrainska viina, 1942-1947* (The Second Polish-Ukrainian War, 1942-1947, 2012). This is the second, revised and expanded edition. A Polish translation was published in 2013 (see Wiatrowycz) and an English translation is planned. The book's first edition came out alongside a two-volume collection of documents edited by the researcher and entitled *Polsko-ukrainski stosunki v 1942-1947 rokakh u dokumentakh OUN ta UPA* (Polish-Ukrainian Relations in 1942-1947 in Documents of the OUN and UPA, 2011) In preparing the book and compiling the documents, he was able to use materials in the SBU archive, where he worked in the years 2008-10. He also made use of the papers of Mykola Lebed, which exist both at the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute and the Archive of the Centre for Research into the Liberation Movement in Kyiv (ATsDVR), and materials from the Central State Archive of Civic Organizations (TsDAHO) and other collections in Kyiv. The second revised edition added materials from the Volodymyr Kubijovic archive in the Library and Archives of Canada, Ottawa, which contain substantial documentation on events in the Kholm/Chełm region. For this edition he also added information from the interrogation protocols of UPA fighters made by Soviet forces.

Viatrovyč's book succeeded in challenging the commentary of some Polish researchers, whom he views as biased and prejudiced against Ukrainians. For example, he exposes the Polish media's incorrect attribution of photographs (Viatrovyč 2012, 24) and the way the discussion of Volhynia has been conducted in Poland since 2003 (Ibid., 307-23). He objects to use of the term genocide in connection with events in Volhynia in 1943-44, arguing instead that the Polish-Ukrainian conflict should be situated within a wider framework: a long-standing war that dates back at least to 1918-19. As for the events in Volhynia, he argues that "the first armed clashes in the Chełm/Kholm region in the summer of 1942 can be considered the beginning of the war, and its final act was the Vistula Operation (Akcja Wisła), which ended in July 1947" (Ibid., 39). The book is also interesting in the prominence it gives to the armed struggle in the Zakerzonnia (the territories beyond the Curzon line: Chełm, Podlachie, Nadsianie and the Lemko region) in 1945-47 and the expulsion of the Ukrainian population from these lands immediately after the war. The revised edition contains an entire new section devoted to this issue (Ibid., 243-303). The author demonstrates how both the Polish government in exile and the Ukrainian underground failed to come to an agreement because they wanted the territories of Volhynia, Galicia and Zakerzonnia to be in the postwar period, respectively, a part of Poland and of Ukraine. To a degree he succeeds in complicating the picture of the war. He quotes Iaroslav Hrytsak:

When dealing with events in Volhynia in the spring of 1943 we have to account for several factors: the 'macrowar' between the Nazis and the Soviet state, two superpowers; the 'microwar' between Polish, Ukrainian and Soviet undergrounds; a small civil war between various groups in the Ukrainian underground (such as the conflict between the banderites, the bulbashites and the melnykites, or the competition for power within the newly-created UPA between Galician and Volhynian groups); a peasant war for the land;

and, finally, the simple criminal dregs (*bandytske shumovynnia*), which exploited the war and were widespread in the Volhynian forests. To complete the picture, we could add the destruction of Volhynian Jews by the Nazis, which although it did not have a direct influence on the massacres of 1943, indirectly contributed to the terrible devaluation of human life in the consciousness of many Volhynians. (Hrytsak, 2003, 7-8; quoted in Viatrovych 40-41)

Viatrovych succeeds in raising these issues, but shows little interest in developing them. He is more concerned with a counter-argument that lacks nuance and is clearly *parti-pris* or preconceived. For example, in the preface he states that one of the lessons of the war should be that “in such conflicts it is often impossible to clearly separate participants into heroes and criminals, executioners and victims, and even less possible to draw this line between national communities that opposed one another” (Viatrovych 2012, 8). This insight could have been followed up with an analysis of personal motivation, which would have involved greater attention to the biographies of participants, and to an analysis of what drove ordinary people to kill defenceless populations. Unfortunately, such a psychological and social analysis is not attempted.

Andriy Zayarnyuk has suggested that this kind of work should be the next stage in scholarly research into the events in Volhynia in 1943 and similar mass killings in the following years. He has argued that in this respect scholars could pursue the insights into violence made by Holocaust scholars, such as Raul Hilberg, Hannah Arendt, Christopher Browning and Daniel Goldhagen (Zaiarniuk 2016). Zayarnyuk points out that the debate between “functionalists” (those, like Browning, who sought explanations for the behaviour of ordinary people in a wide range of causes) and “intentionalists” (those, like Goldhagen, who found explanations for violence in ideology) has strong implications for studies of the Volhynian events and could be explored in much greater depth (Ibid.). Thus, for example, Rossoliński-Liebe has argued the “intentionalist” case by indicating “the racist roots of the OUN-B ideology” and the connection of “pathological sadism” to this ideology (Rossoliński-Liebe 2014, 268). The numerous atrocities against Poles were, according to this view, ideologically motivated, planned and ordered (Ibid. 268-69). A more “functionalist” view that sees events as a product of the wartime situation has been argued by Timothy Snyder (1999, 2003a, 2003b).

The main criticisms of Viatrovych’s text have focused precisely on his preconceived viewpoint, which produces a strongly slanted presentation of facts. Often these criticisms have been contextualized as part of an attempt to create heroes out of the OUN and UPA during President Yushchenko’s presidency (2005-2010), a time when Viatrovych became head of the Institute of National Memory (from 2006) and the security service’s archives (HDASBU). These appointments provided him with privileged access to materials, which he could select to support his case, or ignore if they portrayed matters in a different light. The same argument is used today. As director of the Institute for National Memory, Viatrovych is frequently charged with waging a campaign to deny the

OUN's complicity in crimes during the Second World War.<sup>3</sup> In the light of his expressed desire to shape cultural memory and produce a national narrative in which the OUN and UPA figure as liberation fighters, most Western scholars have questioned the author's presentation of facts. These issues were raised in the discussion in *Ab Imperio* 1 (2012).

It should be noted that not only Western scholars, but various commentators in Ukraine have also complained about the narrow-minded use of the events in Volhynia in 1943 by political parties. Vitaliy Portnikov (2016) has argued that the intervention of politicians into the discussion has prevented broader comparisons between similarly violent events in different places and among different peoples. Iurii Vynnychuk has poured scorn on the campaign by the Svoboda party to create a cult of UPA, which involves wearing uniforms, marching in processions, popularizing symbols never in fact used by the UPA, creating a cult around Bandera, and celebrating the feast of Mary the Protectress (Pokrova) as the day on which the UPA was (mistakenly) supposed to have been founded. In his view "professional patriots" with a perverted understanding of historical events have influenced the public mind (Vynnychuk 2015, 338-39). Taras Vozniak, the long-time editor of the Lviv journal *I*, has similarly complained of the Ukrainian public's preparedness to discuss the Volynian massacres and in particular the works of Grzegorz Motyka, without any knowledge of the literature on the subject and with a purely imagined idea of what Motyka's text actually says (Vozniak 2015c, 77). In various articles on the topic, these authors have complained of the way the issue of Volhynia has been manipulated by Ukrainian, Polish and Russian presses and politicians.<sup>4</sup>

The most vigorous scholarly complaints have been issued against Viatrovych's insistence on an equivalence between the killing of Poles in Volhynia and the killing of Ukrainians, his desire to conflate the Ukrainian national liberation struggle with the OUN(b), his silence or misrepresentation of the OUN's political program and ideology in the 1930s and early 1940s, his omission of the Holocaust, his refusal to admit that the OUN(b) and UPA took a decision to begin the destruction of Poles in Volhynia in 1943, and his reluctance to recognize the guilt of Ukrainians in conducting the massacres.

## 1. The insistence on equivalence between the killing of Poles in Volhynia and the killing of Ukrainians

The book's main argument is that the wartime Polish-Ukrainian conflict should be placed within the context of a longer war, one that includes the armed clashes of 1918-19 and the confrontations within interwar Poland. Related to this is the attempt to focus

3 Most recently, on the occasion of the President of Israel's speech in the Ukrainian parliament on 27 September 2016, Viatrovych offered a Facebook post that denied the OUN's participation in the Holocaust.

4 See especially the articles by Taras Vozniak, who published and gave a number of interviews in Polish and Ukrainian newspapers on the subject: Vozniak 2015a, 2015b, 2015c.

attention on the events in Chełm/Kholm in the years 1942-47 and to Operation Vistula (Akcja Wisła) in the immediate postwar years, which serve as the extended book-ends to the Volhynian events of 1943-44. In presenting this case the author highlights atrocities that took place on the Polish side and the biased presentation of these events in the Polish media. Polish scholars have without exception refused to accept that the earlier events in Chełm/Kholm directly influenced the Volhynian massacre. They also reject the argument for equivalence. The number of Poles killed is generally estimated at 70,000 and the number of Ukrainians at 20,000, but the majority of Poles were civilians murdered in Volhynia in 1943. Viatrovykh suggests that the figures might be closer to 39,000 and 16,000 (Viatrovykh 2012 241-42). Polish scholars tend to argue that the attacks on Ukrainians in Chełm/Kholm in 1942-43, however brutal, were not on the same scale or of the same nature. Viatrovykh, however, focuses on the elimination of community leaders, providing the figure of 543 murders of community leaders or prominent activists, including priests, in the Chełm/Kholm region between August 1942 and August 1943 (Ibid., 126, 128). Although the argument has been used that these were German collaborators, it has been pointed out by several scholars that there was a deliberate Polish policy to remove leaders (Ibid., 101), and that killing individuals from another group was easier than killing collaborators from one's own group (Ibid., 86). This removal of elites accelerated a rapid descent into chaos (Ibid., 98).

Viatrovykh makes the point that news of events in Chełm/Kholm, Galicia and Volhynia spread rapidly between these territories, often in the form of unsubstantiated rumours, and fueled the anger and violence (Ibid., 129, 131, 140). The widespread destruction of churches and Ukrainian community life had, in any case, already been initiated by the Polish authorities in 1938 (Ibid., 86). He argues that the events of 1942-44 produced a “domino effect,” in which “news of anti-Ukrainian actions in the Chełm/Kholm region arrived in Volhynia and provoked mass anti-Polish actions there, news of which then drove the Polish underground in Galicia to conduct anti-Ukrainian acts” (Ibid., 181). Even though it can be accepted that these events contributed to the Ukrainian victimization narrative and the population's radicalization, they still do not explain the decision to conduct ethnic cleansing in Volhynia.

## 2. The conflation of the Ukrainian national liberation struggle with the OUN(b), and the silence or misrepresentation of the OUN's program, ideology and actions in the 1930s and early 1940s

One of Viatrovykh's strongest biases is expressed in the desire to present the OUN as a liberation force and to ignore any contradictory argument. From beginning to end the book conflates the national liberation struggle not merely with the OUN but specifically with the OUN(b). In fact, the book uses the term “national liberationists” as a syn-

onym for the OUN(b). This is unwarranted, if only because the OUN in the thirties was a minority party, even in Galicia. It gained control over the underground and the UPA in 1943, often through force, and even then, the fighters did not necessarily belong to the party. The term “banderites” was used as shorthand for the militant nationalists in the underground. Later, in emigration the OUN(b) remained a minority party and was largely avoided and openly criticized by most Ukrainians, certainly by those who came from Central and Eastern Ukraine, and by most intellectuals. None of this appears to interest or concern Viatrovych, which is surprising since one would expect any discussion of the OUN as a national liberationist movement to take into account the views of the OUN’s founders, ideologists and leaders, most of whom broke with the OUN(b), and criticized it during and after the war.<sup>5</sup>

Viatrovych’s text can therefore be seen as representing a contemporary defence of the OUN(b), its policies and practices. An analysis of the book’s argumentation reveals a strategy of containment: acts of violence are not denied (the author brings to light some shocking incidents), but are framed as the inevitable consequence of war and the struggle for national liberation. Violence is attributed to the time: he speaks of the constant struggle for control of the land and against dominant ruling groups as a widely-observed process, and suggests (incorrectly) that scholars like Andrea Graziosi and Ernest Gellner have recognized the necessity of population removal (Ibid., 43, 123). He supports the idea of ethnic cleansing by arguing that the removal of the Polish population in Volhynia was necessary because the “Poles of Western Ukraine gave their underground personnel, material and informational resources, without which their development in an ethnically foreign and often hostile terrain was impossible” (Viatrovych, 120).

In line with this strategy he refuses to define the OUN’s prewar politics or ideology, which even a cursory survey reveals to be totalitarian, anti-democratic and sectarian. Its campaigns of intimidation against democratic parties and intellectuals, which accelerated under Bandera’s leadership in the 1930s in Galicia, is ignored, and its position as a small minority party in the national movement is never mentioned. Moreover, the OUN(b)’s break from the mainstream OUN leadership in Europe in 1939 and its murder of activists who refused to align themselves with the Bandera wing (those, in particular, who recognized the Melnyk wing and the European leadership) is also passed over in silence. The result is a conjurer’s trick: the previous history of the OUN disappears, as does awareness that there were other strands of the OUN. The impression is created of a seamless, single party under one leader. Even the acronyms OUN(b), OUN(m), or the later OUN(z) are never mentioned.

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5 For a brief discussion of the postwar debates within the different wings of the OUN, see Shkandrij 72-76, 128-31. The book also ignores the large body of literature produced by writers who were sympathetic to or members of the OUN. Most of them severely criticized the policies and action of the OUN(b). For an analysis of seven major figures, see Shkandrij 2015 175-267.

By taking such a preordained position the researcher is driven to distort facts. One example will have to suffice. In discussing the new “foreign-relations policy” produced in December 1940 by the “newly-created OUN under Stepan Bandera,” Viatrovych provides a quotation from the organization’s new “Manifesto.” He mentions the desire expressed in this document to create “a new order” and to “lay the basis of political system.” He then goes on to state that one of the creators of this new concept was Ivan Mitrynga, who suggested the slogan: “Together with the Poles, French and peoples of the USSR for a free Europe without Hitler and Stalin” (Ibid., 73). He fails to mention, however, that during this conference of the OUN(b) held in Krakow in February 1940, Bandera’s circle rejected the slogan, saying that the search for “friends” (meaning allied peoples) was over and that “Ukraine’s place was in the new Europe” (Kentii 2005, 180). The new Europe was, of course, a fascist, pro-German one.

Such a blatant misrepresentation of the OUN’s positions is problematic not only because it is a form of disinformation and miseducation. In the present circumstances it represents a lost opportunity to educate about the evolution of the OUN and UPA. Instead the author has chosen to mythologize the party and movement. However, even in terms of the desire to strengthen support for national liberationism, this is a failing strategy. Andreas Umland has argued that glorifying Bandera and the OUN is not only bad history, but damages Ukraine’s reputation among its friends in the West (Umland 2016). The facts will nonetheless inevitably emerge and will result in the disillusionment of a misguided public. A range of German, Polish, Ukrainian and North American scholars are currently producing scholarly accounts that document the activities of the OUN and UPA and paint an entirely different picture. Viatrovych’s evasiveness in this context is a disservice to readers who wish to understand the nature of the OUN, the UPA and the events in Volhynia during 1943-44. A reader of his book will remain unaware of the fact that the OUN’s secret police, the SB, shot members of rival Ukrainian organizations, hundreds of UPA members whom it wrongfully suspected of disloyalty, and Ukrainian peasants whom it accused of various transgressions (See, for example, Berkhoff 2004, 297).

### 3. The lack of discussion concerning the Holocaust

The book lacks any serious discussion of the Holocaust, which hardly figures in Viatrovych’s account. It is mentioned in passing that the number of soldiers in the UPA was substantially strengthened when Ukrainians in the German-organized police force were given orders by the OUN to desert and join the fighters in the forest in March 1943. At this point Viatrovych agrees that the OUN-controlled UPA became the dominant underground in Volhynia, changing the balance of power (Viatrovych 2012, 141). However, he challenges Snyder’s view that when the Germans organized a genocide of Volhynian Jews, these Ukrainian policemen had witnessed or participated in it, thus acquiring



practical knowledge of how genocide can be conducted effectively (Snyder 2003a, 198-99). Although Viatrovych claims that Snyder fails to produce any evidence, there is now an emerging consensus among scholars. Various researchers have argued that in the massacre of Poles the scale of operations, their organized and coordinated nature, and their effectiveness are indications of prior knowledge of the methods of mass murder.

In a similar way, Viatrovych denies the OUN(b)'s racism. He rejects the claim that one of the most racist publications of the late thirties, Mykhailo Kolodzinsky's *Voienna doktryna ukraïnskykh natsionalistiv* (Military Doctrine of Ukrainian Nationalists, 1938) had any currency within the organization. In it Kolodzinsky calls for a struggle not only against the state structure of the Polish occupying power, but against the people on whom it rests. They have to be "cleaned out of Ukraine as a foreign, hostile element" (quoted in Viatrovych 2012, 52). Oleksandr Zaitsev agrees with Viatrovych that Kolodzinsky's statements had no official support within the OUN leadership. They were, however, symptomatic of a drift toward greater antisemitic and racist positions in the years 1937-41. There is plenty of evidence for this in the pronouncements of the OUN(b) leaders (See, for example, Shkandrij 2015 53-55, 112-21). It is also significant, as Berkhoff has pointed out, that the OUN "never opposed specifically the murder of Jews, not even in words" (Berkhoff 2004, 310).

#### 4. The refusal to admit that the OUN(b) and UPA took a decision to begin the destruction of Poles in Volhynia in 1943

The refusal to accept that any decision was made by the leadership of the OUN or the UPA to unleash the mass killing of Poles in 1943 hinges on the lack of a document or "smoking gun." Serhii Riabenko has supported Viatrovych's point here by indicating the lack of conclusive evidence in Polish accounts (Riabenko 2016). However, not only most Western scholars, but respected Ukrainian scholars have taken a different view. Iaroslav Hrytsak, for example, has argued that a document ordering the action will probably not be found (at least not one that is unequivocal and will convince everyone of its authenticity) because the instructions may well have been verbal. He is convinced, however, that the instructions were given. Mykola Lebed confided several times to his closest circle that such instructions were given by the UPA and OUN(b) leadership:

Probably, the decision was taken by a section of the leadership, which wanted to secure its positions in the newly-created Army, and in particular to squeeze out Mykola Lebed from the leadership. In any case, it appears that the anti-Polish action became an important factor in the creation of the UPA, its 'baptism by blood.' According to the norms of international law this was a war crime, from the military-political point of view it was completely senseless; after all, the decisive role in the ethnic cleansing of Poles from

Volhynia and Galicia was played not by the UPA's actions but by Stalin's decisions and his agreement with his allies at Yalta. (Hrytsak 2004, 104)

Similarly, the most authoritative Ukrainian researcher on the subject, Ihor Iliushyn, has commented that there were many calls from community leaders to stop the violence, that the armed groups were at first under the OUN(b)'s command, and that "the anti-Polish attacks began under its orders" (Iliushyn 2009, 23, 30-32).

In fact, Viatrovych is ambivalent on this point. He places the blame on Klym Savur (Dmytro Kliachkivsky), the local UPA commander in Volhynia, who "ceased to subordinate himself to the central command" (Viatrovych 2012, 142). Kliachkivsky "approved the decision to let the UPA units conduct anti-Polish actions. In his decisions he relied on a personal understanding of the situation, more than the instructions of central authorities, who, he felt, did not understand the real situation" (Ibid., 143). The blame therefore rests not with the centre. Viatrovych does not explain why the centre in any case went along with the action in subsequent weeks and months.

## 5. Reluctance to recognize the guilt of Ukrainians in conducting the massacres

Viatrovych shows a reluctance to ascribe any guilt to the Ukrainian side in the conflict. The argument of equivalency is repeatedly used to deflect the accusation of guilt. He reasons that if it was in fact a war, with roughly equal numbers killed on both sides, one party cannot be viewed as more guilty than the other. He minimizes, obscures or ignores assessments made by a number of prominent historians, such as Timothy Snyder and Jan T. Gross, leading Polish scholar in the field such as Grzegorz Motyka, and prominent Ukrainian historians like Ihor Iliushyn and Oleksandr Zaitsev.

Viatrovych frequently distorts the arguments of other scholars, whom he tends to consider as opponents. He manifests a remarkable deafness to nuances, and sometimes an unsure handling of the secondary literature. Partially this may be due to his imperfect knowledge of other languages, but it is more convincingly attributed to a polemical tone. He tends to simplify or willfully misinterpret the argument of others, as Motyka 2012, 388) has indicated, in the manner of a debater out to score points, by accusing them of zealotry, while seemingly unaware of his own much greater zealotry in defending or glorifying the OUN.

Other respected Ukrainian historians have behaved differently. Iliushyn has suggested that the OUN(b) leadership and the Ukrainian population that predominated in Volhynia bear the burden of responsibility for the Volhynian tragedy, in the same way as the responsibility for ethnic cleansing of Ukrainians west of the Curzon line (in Chełm,

Podlachie, Nadsianie and the Lemko region) lies with the majority Polish population (Iliushyn 2009, 22). Yaroslav Dashkevych has commented: “the Ukrainian terror of 1942-44 against the Polish population of Western Ukraine, even after attempts to justify it by invoking the idea of revenge for Polish injustices, German and Russian provocations, collaboration by the Armia Krajowa [the Polish underground army] with communist Russia, etc., still deserves a severe and unqualified condemnation” (Dashkevych 1993, 130-31).

These faults of overall conceptualization are compensated to a degree by the wealth of information that Viatrovych offers on the details of local campaigns. The realities of the campaign to cleanse Poles from Volhynia in 1943 and the later campaigns to cleanse Ukrainians from Chełm/Kholm are often presented in vivid detail. The information is based on materials culled from the archives and includes accounts of Polish atrocities (by troops of the Armia Krajowa, the Polish police in German service, and the post-war Polish government). Although the accounts are less forthcoming when they concern atrocities by Ukrainian forces, the inclusion of archival materials from Ukrainian sources dealing with the UPA and OUN, especially the discussion of interrogation protocols of arrested fighters are welcome additions. Viatrovych uses these Soviet protocols effectively, demonstrating how, if carefully analyzed, they are of value to the researcher.

## 6. The issue of ethnic cleansing and genocide

Viatrovych’s account is also valuable in the challenge it poses to some calcified opinions, especially concerning the use of the term genocide in discussions of the Volhynian massacres. In fact, as has been seen, he indirectly admits that ethnic cleansing occurred. His strategy, however, is to situate the events of 1943 within the longer continuum, and to cite mitigating circumstances: the wartime events in Volhynia; the Polish government’s anti-Ukrainian policies of the 1930s, which included resettlement, church closures, and forcing people to declare themselves Poles; the attacks by Poles on the Ukrainian population of Chełm/Kholm in 1938 and 1941-42, and the mass deportations of 1947 during Akcja Wisła (Operation Vistula), which are all seen as the background against which the Volhynian massacres of 1943-44 must be viewed. Ethnic cleansing, in other words, was being practiced by the Poles and other governments at the time. Seen in this light the Volhynian massacre or tragedy, as it is sometimes called, was a “war within a war,” one that had gone on for several decades and had developed its own dynamic. This is his “functionalist” response to the argument of “intentionalists” that the OUN had a calculated, racist intent. The new narrative represents his reconceptualization of the events in Volhynia and is his major contribution to the debate.

Nonetheless, he rejects use of the term genocide. Viatrovych cites the statement of an early Polish researcher Ryszard Torzecki, who commented that the “leadership of the OUN wanted to remove the Polish population from these lands, since they viewed them as a hindrance in the creation of a Ukrainian state. However, they did not plan its [this populations’] physical destruction. This type of action was often a spontaneous reaction of the masses and of local commanders. In many cases the actions escaped the control of the UPA. In other cases the leaders did not know how or, and this should be stressed, did not wish to control them” (quoted in Viatrovych 2012, 36). Viatrovych repeats this argument of several occasions. It is another way of avoiding blame being placed on the OUN and UPA leadership. Instead, the atrocities can be blamed on a peasant *jacquerie*. He indicates that the Homeland Executive (Galician leadership) of the OUN issued an order on 5 May 1944 to give the Polish population several days to emigrate to Polish territory. The order read: “If it refuses to obey this order, fighters should be sent in to liquidate the males, and to burn the houses and goods (to take them apart). Again we emphasize that the Poles first have to be urged to leave the territories and only liquidated after this, not the other way round” (Ibid., 222). Viatrovych comments that the Ukrainian insurgents were given permission to liquidate the male population in the settlements that refused to leave, but argues “nowhere do we see instructions to completely destroy the Poles” (Ibid., 223).

As for incidents where atrocities took place, he places the blame on renegade commanders who disobeyed orders. Some commanders were removed for unsanctioned contacts with the Germans (Ibid., 218). Others, like Mykola Oliinyk were executed for a similar offence and for ordering the Polish population to leave (Ibid., 219-20). The anarchy of early 1943 in Volhynia and the brutal treatment of the Polish population is blamed on the forces of Bulba-Borovets (Ibid., 137). Viatrovych is also inclined to believe reports of brutality committed by the Ukrainian Waffen SS “Galicia” when it put down opposition in villages. He provides insights into several controversial episodes that took place, such as the shootings in the village of Huta Peniacka on 24 February 1944, indicating that a large Soviet partisan group was passing through the village at the time (Ibid., 213, 216-17).

When it comes to the OUN and UPA, however, he tends to minimize or find explanations for the actions. He focuses on the cynical, brutal struggle for control of territory, the stubborn refusal of Polish government to countenance giving up its eastern lands and to come to terms with Ukrainian demands for independence. The implicit argument here is that Ukrainians had to remove the Poles or be removed by them.

## 7. The Struggle over cultural memory

The role of the OUN during the Second World War and, more broadly, of Ukrainians in military formations, has been approached from different angles and treated with different degrees of attention. There is a discourse of Ukrainian suffering (particularly concerning Soviet soldiers, members of the nationalist underground and UPA fighters), which is evident in memoirs, novels and films. In the years since independence, a number of novels and films have appeared on the nationalist underground and the UPA. Yet in this discourse of victimhood, the role of Ukrainians as perpetrators has received little attention. The demystification of innocence and the admission of guilt has rarely been in evidence.

It is instructive to compare the German situation. Different levels of personal guilt have been an important issue in Germany since the Wehrmacht exhibition of 1996. Recent literature has accepted German guilt and opened up new approaches to understanding the experience of German soldiers during the war. Moreover, memory culture of the war is constantly undergoing change. The nature of memory is now conceived as something multidirectional that can accommodate different perspectives. As it changes, it brings up aspects of history that have been previously overshadowed or forgotten. Cultural memory studies have attempted to understand how memory is preserved over generations. This approach also recognizes that the memory of a group is related to the way it defines its identity. Aleida Assmann has described memory as “tied to identity and supporting self-image of groups” (Assmann 2010, 99). However, each identity group deals with memory in a different manner and memory itself is an unstable phenomenon (Feindt et al., 43). Michael Rothberg has further defined memory as multidirectional, as “subject to ongoing negotiations, cross-referencing and borrowing,” as “productive and not private” and therefore open to “cooperation” (Rothberg 1997, 3).

The discourse of German guilt has gone through the Historikerstreit discussion of the 1980s (Traverse 1991, 247-57) and the Wehrmacht Exhibition debate of the late 1990s. This last, Wehrmachtsausstellung exhibition opened on 5 March 1995 and was held in thirty-three German and Austrian cities; a second revised exhibition opened in November 2001, generating much debate (Thiele 1999, 11-12). Finally, there was the Goldhagen-Browning debate in the later 1990s, in which Goldhagen argued the eliminationist thesis, while Browning put forward the view that different factors influence people (Goldhagen, Browning, Wieseltier 1996). Through these discussions a broader readership is now familiar with shades of guilt (among bystanders and perpetrators), individual and shared responsibility. German guilt and suffering have coexisted in popular awareness since the 1970s, when the Holocaust memory entered the public sphere (Assmann 2006, 187). Ukrainian memory studies are presently only beginning to deal with the coexistence of different memories of a shared past. Victim and perpetrator memories of the Second World War have clashed, nowhere more than in accounts of the

OUN and the Volhynian massacres. The myth of the innocent fighter or young person caught up in the war is not necessarily false, but it has to be set against the much greater victimhood of civilian populations, particularly Jews, but also, in the case of Volhynia, Poles. Awareness of events should not blind us to the coexistence of both victimhood and perpetratorship in one group or person. In the current debate, the OUN and the UPA have been taken by some scholars as outright guilty parties without the right to inclusion in a narrative of suffering. Others have assumed that they are unquestionably heroic organization with no relationship to perpetratorship. This debate has now reached a sterile impasse, one that does not allow discussion of other questions, such as the devastating effect of the war and the circumstances that brought about recruitment and violent acts, the presence of unwilling or underage participants, and the psychology of the participants in violence, or the interaction of different memory groups.

## *Between national liberation and collaboration*

There is no question among historians that the Ukrainian population was victimized during and after the war. Tarik Cyril Amar has written that after reoccupying Western Ukraine, the Soviet party-state “won its dirty war of counterinsurgency, killing more than 150,000, deporting more than 200,000, and incarcerating nearly 110,000 locals” (Amar 2015, 17). In Poland under Operation Vistula (*Akcja Wisła*), which began on 28 April 1947, some 150,000 Ukrainians were deported from the country’s south-eastern lands by the Polish army in cooperation with Soviet forces. In this way the Ukrainian population was dispersed and the last resistance of the UPA was crushed, in what many thought was an act of revenge for the removal of Poles from Volhynia (Viatrovych 2012, 296-97). However, the experience of Polish, Jewish and other victimhoods has never been adequately integrated into a common narrative. Nor have complicated questions such as the wartime cooperation of Ukrainian organizations like the *Ukrainskyi Tsentralnyi Komitet* (UTsK) been studied and analyzed. The UTsK worked with the Germans, in what Amar describes as “a form of collaboration *afin d’etat*, an attempt to instrumentalize Nazi power for Ukrainian national aims, including the creation of a state” (Amar 2015, 128). Another unresearched issue is the problem of postwar killings by nationalists (primarily the OUN-controlled UPA). The number of such killings has been estimated at 30,676; half were peasant and collective-farm members (Sokhan et al., 68-69; quoted in Amar 2015, 195). The complex interaction of national liberation, collaboration and oppression of local populations has hardly as yet been tackled in the Ukrainian context.

## *Ordinary people transformed*

In his classic study *Ordinary Men* Browning demonstrates how mass murder and routine can become normal, and how in hindsight memory presents a confusing array of perspectives (Browning 1993, xviii-xix). He describes, for example, how in 1942-43 Jew hunt-

ing in the countryside was part of the work done by the Order Police, and how this was never reported in any interviews conducted with this police (Ibid., 121-32). He similarly describes how German policemen when interviewed shifted the blame for antisemitism onto local Poles (Ibid., 150-55). Browning emphasizes the impact of systematic destruction on the people who witnessed it or participated in it, and the importance of social influences in allowing individuals to commit atrocities (Ibid., 165-66). The potential for violence, he suggests as a “functionalist”, can be roused in all people under particular circumstances; and later they can revert to law-abiding behaviour (Ibid., 166). Although ideological indoctrination plays a role in obtaining willing obedience, he considers this an insufficient explanation for participation in violence (Ibid., 176, 179). Among the Order Police some individuals refused to kill; others stopped killing. “Human responsibility is ultimately an individual matter,” he has argued (Ibid., 188). These considerations are germane to any analysis of the violence unleashed in Volhynia. Yet, the scholarship has not explored them, and Viatrovych’s book shows no interest in opening up psychological lines of inquiry.

A scholar interested in an “intentionalist” approach (the overriding importance of national liberation in Viatrovych’s case) might be expected to consider how extreme forms of violence are often motivated by principle, which acts as a higher law. The appeal of nationalism as a quasi-religious belief might profitably have been investigated by the researcher, but was not. The reader is left with the picture of a violent national liberation struggle, but without understand why many villagers participated in the violence. To understand this, we no doubt have to go beyond the exclusive focus on ideology.

The complex experience of local people is probably best treated not in parts but as a whole, as the product of waves of violence by successive invading armies and violent regimes. First the Soviet regime, then the Germans conducted mass arrests and deportations, spread violent propaganda and recruited local people into battalions and auxiliary units. Then the process was repeated again when the Soviets returned. The primary targets of the violence were different in the various waves: first Poles, then Jews and Russians, then Ukrainians and Poles. Viatrovych’s book hints at this overall picture and at times moves in the direction of such an analysis, but is then arrested by his polemical intent and his defensive posture vis-à-vis the OUN and UPA. This makes it a provocative and interesting contribution to the debate, but at the same time a deeply flawed one.

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