

10

Memory Wars and Reconciliation in the Ukrainian–Polish Borderlands: Geopolitics of Memory from a Local Perspective

Tatiana Zhurzhenko

On 22 January 2010, Ukraine's Unity Day, the outgoing president Viktor Yushchenko posthumously awarded Stepan Bandera, the icon of militant Ukrainian nationalism, the official title 'Hero of Ukraine'. While Western Ukraine enthusiastically welcomed the long-awaited decree, it found much less understanding in the rest of the country. The controversial act also had a significant international resonance. Protests took place in many Polish cities. President Lech Kaczyński, despite his personal sympathy to Yushchenko, criticized the decree as an 'action aimed against the historical reconciliation process between Poland and Ukraine'. On 25 February 2010, the European Parliament, on the initiative of the Polish members, passed a resolution denouncing Yushchenko's decree. Not surprisingly, the resolution was welcomed by Moscow, which urged the incoming president Yanukovich to revoke the decree of his predecessor. In a letter to the European Parliament, Yushchenko insisted on his decision. An appeal in defense of Bandera was signed by a group of deputies of the Ukrainian parliament. Lviv's regional assembly also issued an open letter to the European Parliament defending the honor of Stepan Bandera and the right of the Ukrainians to have their own heroes, even if they are not popular among their neighbors. On the Polish side, the situation was used by the nationalists and right-wing politicians to fuel anti-Ukrainian sentiments. The unfortunate decoration of Bandera alone could not shake Ukrainian–Polish relations, but it contributed to the general 'Ukraine weariness' that Polish political elites and society at large felt after the failure of the Orange

Revolution. The model of Ukrainian–Polish reconciliation based on the assumption that Ukraine is following the ‘Polish path’ to Europe was challenged by the comeback of pro-Russian Viktor Yanukovich.

The Bandera episode is not only symptomatic of Ukrainian–Polish relations, but also reveals complexities and ambiguities of reconciliation as such, which, according to Lily Gardner Feldman, always melds moral imperative with pragmatic interest.

Relations of reconciliation . . . involve cooperation and confrontation; governments and societies; long-term vision and short-term strategy; political support and opposition. In reconciliation, the mix of pragmatism and morality differs depending on history, institutions, leadership and international context, or what we could call the political dynamics of the process.

(Gardner Feldman, 1999, p. 334)

Polish–Ukrainian reconciliation deals with a centuries-long common history and brutal ethnic conflicts, but it can be understood only in the context of contemporary tendencies: the globalization of the discourse on genocide and the ‘competition of victims’, post-Soviet nation building and the challenges of coping with the Communist past, European Union (EU) enlargement and the changing role of Russia in Eastern Europe.

Another aspect of reconciliation often underestimated by observers is its regional (local) dimension. While national elites and central governments usually play the leading role in reconciliation by settling political priorities and creating institutions, regional state bodies, municipalities, local politicians and other political actors (academic institutions, ethnic and cultural associations, churches and the media) have their own interests in this process. Regional elites often claim to have more knowledge about their neighbor across the border (including language competence and personal contacts) and are particularly interested in foreign investments, cross-border cooperation and tourism. At the same time, local politicians tend to instrumentalize the collective memories and historical traumas of the population for electoral purposes or for bargaining with the central government.

As the center of the ‘Ukrainian Piedmont’ and the motor of de-Sovietization, Lviv has been playing a special role in the Ukrainian–Polish reconciliation. Once a Polish city, with its symbolic landscape radically re-shaped during the Soviet era and further Ukrainized in the last two decades, it still fuels the cultural imagination and nostalgia of

the Poles. Though a traditional stronghold of Ukrainian nationalism, today's Lviv claims the role of a cultural capital and a European city. A constant challenge to the 'pro-Russian' Kyiv, Lviv elites favor the 'Polish model' of post-Communist transition and see the future of Ukraine in the EU and NATO. Situated in a border region that has fallen victim to power politics on more than one occasion, Lviv is particularly sensitive to geopolitical changes in Eastern Europe. The economic well-being of the local population depends on cross-border small trade and labor migration, both of which have been significantly affected by the EU and Schengen area enlargements. Their economic and social consequences interplay with resentments and stereotypes about the Polish neighbors and with collective memories and traumas of the past. The strengthened border regime and the new visa policies, which contribute to fears of exclusion and international isolation, resonate with the old asymmetry in Ukrainian–Polish relations and turn the reconciliation process into power struggle.

Starting with a brief summary of the Ukrainian–Polish conflict and an overview of the reconciliation process initiated in the early 1990s, this chapter explores the complexities and ambiguities of reconciliation from a local perspective, focusing on Lviv and the Lviv region. It addresses the ambivalent politics of the Lviv municipality and the regional assembly toward the memory of the Ukrainian–Polish conflict and seeks to explain the controversial behavior of the main political actors. The central question addressed in this chapter – how does reconciliation actually 'take place', or in other words, how does it become possible in a particular local political setting – is answered by analyzing three commemorative initiatives that demonstrate the interplay of national and regional (local) interests in the reconciliation process. The first example is the conflict around the Eaglets' Cemetery in Lviv in the early 2000s. The second example deals with the opening of the memorial for the Ukrainian victims in the Polish village of Pawłokoma in 2006, and the third focuses on the controversies around the Polish memorial in Huta Pieniacka near Lviv, which was reopened in 2009.

A brief history of the Ukrainian–Polish conflict

Originally the center of the medieval Ruthenian principality of Halych-Volhynia, Lviv (Polish: Lwów; German: Lemberg) came under Polish rule in 1349. After the partitions of Poland the city became the capital of the newly acquired Austrian province of Galicia. From the second half of the 19th century Eastern Galicia saw a growing competition of Polish

and Ukrainian nationalisms. The Roman Catholic Poles were the dominant group in the province; they drew their aspirations from a long history of statehood and a 'high culture'. The Ukrainians (Ruthenians), most of them Greek Catholics,¹ were a peasants' nation in the making. The First World War and the collapse of the Habsburg Empire led to a radicalization of nationalist claims. On the night of 1 November 1918, the Ukrainians took control over Lviv and declared the West Ukrainian People's Republic (ZUNR). On their part, the Poles continued to claim Galicia as an integral part of their newly established state. Facing the superiority of the Polish military forces supported by the local Polish population, Ukrainians left Lviv after fierce street fights and ultimately lost their cause some months later. In 1923 Eastern Galicia, overwhelmingly populated by ethnic Ukrainians, came under Polish rule. The Ukrainian nationalists did not want to accept this outcome; in 1929 the radical Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) was formed. In response to the acts of sabotage and terror practiced by the OUN, Ukrainian villages were 'pacified' by the Polish police and Ukrainian activists were arrested.

In September 1939 Eastern Poland was occupied by the Soviet army. The Ukrainian population did not regret the end of Polish rule and initially welcomed the affirmative Soviet policy of Ukrainization. However, the mood soon changed as arrests and deportations were targeted not only at the Polish, but also at the Ukrainian elites. In the summer of 1941, during the first weeks of the Nazi aggression against the Soviet Union, around 10,000 political prisoners – mostly Ukrainians – were killed by the NKVD in Western Ukraine – an action skillfully used by the Nazis to provoke anti-Jewish pogroms. As with other losers of the Versailles system, the Ukrainian nationalists connected their hopes for independence with Hitler. The Bandera faction of the OUN proclaimed an independent Ukrainian state in Lviv on 30 June 1941. But the Nazis were not interested in Ukrainian nationalists as allies. Quite soon they became an object of repressions; Stephan Bandera was arrested and put in a concentration camp. In 1942 the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) was formed to fight for an independent Ukrainian state, whose main enemy, after Stalingrad, had become Stalin.

It was during the Second World War that mutual hostilities between Poles and Ukrainians in the Nazi-occupied territories of Eastern Poland escalated into ethnic cleansings. In the summer of 1943, mass killings of Polish civilians were committed by the UPA and the local Ukrainian population in Volhynia. The ethnic conflict spread to Eastern Galicia and other areas of mixed Ukrainian–Polish settlement. Some Ukrainian

villages along the river San and in the Chełm area were ‘pacified’ by the Home Army (AK) and by Polish self-defense units as retaliation for the UPA actions against Poles. Around 100,000 Poles and 20,000 Ukrainians were killed in this ethnic conflict. According to Timothy Snyder, ‘by 1944, Stalin seems to have concluded that ethnic homogeneity in combination with the Molotov–Ribbentrop borders of 1939 would make both Poland and Ukraine easier to rule’ (Snyder, 2003, p. 182). During 1944–46 almost 500,000 Ukrainians were ‘repatriated’ from Poland to Soviet Ukraine. At the same time, over one million Poles from the former *kresy* (now Western Ukraine and Western Belarus) moved to the ‘recovered territories’ in the West of Poland. In 1947 a forceful deportation of the remaining Ukrainian population (the so-called ‘Operation Vistula’) was carried out: around 150,000 Ukrainians were forcefully resettled to the Western and Northern areas of Poland that had been taken from Germany. Operation Vistula was not just an ‘anti-terrorist’ action; its aim was the assimilation of the Ukrainian minority and thus the final solution of the Ukrainian question (Snyder, 2003, p. 197).

The decades-long Polish–Ukrainian conflict left deep scars in the collective memories of both nations, which both developed their own narratives of suffering: while the Poles cannot forget the victims of the ‘UPA bandits’, the Ukrainians still recall Polish repressions in the interwar period and the retaliation actions of the AK. In the post-war decades, these memories were repressed by the Communist authorities, but the collapse of the Soviet empire re-opened the old wounds. In Poland, liberalization opened the way for the creation of numerous civic associations and the institutionalization of old/new ‘communities of memory’: the AK veterans, expellees from the ‘eastern Polish lands’ and ‘victims of Ukrainian nationalists’. These new ‘commemorative entrepreneurs’ (Mink, 2008) have often been nationalist and xenophobic; they do not enjoy serious political influence but are well organized and highly mobilized. In 2003, using the 60th anniversary of the Volhynia massacre, they launched an extensive campaign with the aim of obtaining Ukraine’s official acknowledgment of what they consider the ‘*ludobójstwo*’ (genocide) of the Polish population (Kasianov, 2006, p. 249). In Western Ukraine, anti-Polish sentiments are still present today, especially among the older generation; here, too, associations of UPA veterans and Ukrainian expellees were created in the early 1990s. However, in political terms anti-Polish nationalism has been extremely marginal even in Western Ukraine, which is rather preoccupied with the Soviet heritage and with Russia’s persisting political and cultural influence.

Ukrainian–Polish reconciliation after 1991

The Ukrainian–Polish reconciliation was prepared in the post-war decades by Jerzy Giedroyc, a Polish emigrant publisher, intellectual and editor of the Paris-based magazine *Kultura*. While most of the Polish emigrant milieu dreamed of a return of the *kresy*, the Eastern Polish borderlands, Giedroyc was the first to realize that after the fall of Communism good relations with independent Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania and democratic Russia would be crucial for Poland. Giedroyc's vision of the future Eastern Europe influenced the new generation of Polish intellectuals and shaped the political ethos of *Solidarność*. Already in 1990 Lech Wałęsa, Adam Michnik and Jacek Kuroń established contacts with the newly formed Ukrainian popular movement *Narodnyi Ruch*. On 3 September 1990 the Polish Senate officially denounced Operation Vistula. In 1991 Poland was the first state to recognize Ukraine's independence, a conscious act of the Polish leadership that had great symbolic weight. In the early 1990s, this '*Solidarność* ethos' determined Polish policy toward Ukraine. As Timothy Snyder put it, Polish national elites demonstrated the ability to differentiate 'between state interests and national memories' (Snyder, 2003, p. 274).

For the new Ukrainian state the support of Poland was crucial in the first years of independence and helped to counterbalance the strong Russian influence. Poland became a model of economic and political reforms and later an advocate of Ukrainian interests in the EU. It has been one of the few geopolitical allies to support Ukraine's accession to the EU and NATO, and has been even more resolute in this respect than the Ukrainian leadership itself. In 1997 the 'Common Declaration of the Presidents of Ukraine and Poland on Mutual Understanding and Reconciliation' was signed in Kyiv. Good relations with his Polish counterpart were important for Leonid Kuchma, who in his second term became embroiled in political scandals and came under severe criticism at home and in the West. The Polish president Kwaśniewski tried to prevent the international isolation of Kuchma's government while at the same time supporting the Ukrainian democratic opposition. While in 2003 the Ukrainian and Polish parliaments got involved in the contentious debates on the interpretation of the Volhynian tragedy, both presidents met at the commemorative ceremony in the village of Pavlivka in Volhynia and made a joint statement on the need for reconciliation.² During the Orange Revolution in 2004 Alexander Kwaśniewski and Lech Wałęsa took the role of mediators and helped solve the conflict in Kyiv peacefully.

In Poland the Orange Revolution was perceived as a decisive Ukrainian step toward democracy and European integration and as a success of Poland's Eastern policy. Viktor Yushchenko was seen in Poland as the political leader of a new generation, pro-European and free from the burden of the Communist past. But radical political changes soon occurred in Poland as well: in September 2005 Lech Kaczyński became president and soon afterward his right-wing populist PiS Party won the majority in the Polish parliament. The new conservative and nationalist Polish leadership instrumentalized historical memory in domestic as well as in international politics, re-opening political confrontation with both Russia and Germany. In the context of the escalating Bush–Putin rivalry in the post-Soviet space, anti-Communist and anti-Moscow sentiments became an ideological priority in Ukrainian–Polish relations. However, Kaczyński and Yushchenko soon lost popular support at home and respect abroad. Both found themselves in a marginalized position appealing to the right-wing and conservative segments of their electorates and thus unwillingly re-animating old nationalist ghosts.

Lviv: A local perspective on Polish–Ukrainian reconciliation

The role of Lviv in the Ukrainian–Polish reconciliation process is ambivalent: for decades an object of contestation between the two nations and a stronghold of Ukrainian nationalism, the city has a vivid liberal intellectual milieu and a pro-European civil society. Due to their efforts, some new inclusive commemorative projects emerged recently, among them a new initiative aimed at increasing the visibility of the local sites of Jewish memory, and a joint Polish–Ukrainian contest for a monument to the Polish university professors executed by the Nazis in 1941. Lviv's Mayor Andriy Sadovyi (in office since 2006), who comes from the non-governmental organization sector, has good contacts with the Polish side and is supported by Lviv's liberal intelligentsia. The municipal authorities want to present the city as modern, multicultural and inclusive ('A city open to the world' is the official motto of the Lviv city council). A whole range of institutions rooted in civil society and often developed with the help of Western sponsors (PAUCI, the Carpathian Euroregion, etc.) promotes tourism as well as the exchange of civic activists and youth contacts. The European image of Lviv is stimulated and rewarded by a growing flow of tourists, while the European Football Championship held in 2012 in Poland and Ukraine (Lviv was

one of its sites) served as a great incentive for Ukrainian–Polish cooperation. At the same time, the mayor, who is under growing pressure from the right-wing nationalists,³ presents himself to the local public as a true Ukrainian patriot. The Lviv municipality has been restoring numerous graves and memorial sites dedicated to the UPA and the UHA (Ukrainian Galician Army), and UPA veterans get additional allowances from the city budget. New museums and exhibitions devoted to the UPA were opened in recent years, and in 2007 an impressive monument to Stepan Bandera was erected in the center of Lviv – much to the irritation of the city’s Polish neighbors. In May 2010, the city council made both Stepan Bandera and Roman Shukhevych, the former UPA general, honorary citizens of Lviv. However, this act, a protest against President Yanukovich’s political course, was not meant as anti-Polish. In fact, the Lviv municipality has not been in open confrontation with the Poles since at least 2005, when the conflict around the Eaglets’ Cemetery was resolved.

The Lviv regional assembly has been more nationalist and populist than the city council, however, even if Yushchenko’s ‘Our Ukraine’ political bloc, which dominated the assembly from 2006 to 2010, tried to block any provocative anti-Polish declarations. The problems of Polish–Ukrainian relations are usually raised in the regional assembly by the radical ‘Svoboda’ nationalists and other populist deputies. For example, in September 2009, the Lviv regional assembly denounced the declaration of the Polish Sejm concerning ‘the tragic fate of Poles in the Eastern borderlands’. It was stressed that the use of the term ‘*na kresach wschodnich*’ in the official document is unacceptable and can be interpreted as a territorial claim. Moreover, the official use of the term ‘*ludobójstwo*’ was interpreted by Lviv deputies as an accusation of genocide. In 2009 the Lviv regional council was also involved in a conflict with the regional assembly of the Podkarpackie province concerning the Ukrainian military gravesite on Khreshchata Mountain in the Carpathians. The decision to dismantle the monument (allegedly installed without official permission) made by the Podkarpackie regional assembly appalled the Lviv deputies; in response, they called for more control over Polish commemorative activities on Ukrainian soil.

One reason for the active use of ‘historicization strategies’ by the regional assembly is the way it sees its role in Ukrainian politics. As one of the first democratic regional assemblies where Communists lost control as early as 1990, it is proud to be a stronghold of Ukrainian independence and democracy. In Kuchma’s era the Lviv regional assembly supported the national democratic opposition. Mistrusting Kuchma

and his government, the assembly often went beyond its official powers and interfered in international politics, at least on the level of declarations. It assumed a special role as a protector of the Ukrainian national interests that the central government in Kyiv allegedly was not able to protect, particularly in relations with Russia and Poland. This role hardly changed under president Yushchenko, who could always count upon the support of Lviv's political elites and electorate for his memory politics.

Reconciliation and power asymmetry

According to Georges Mink 'an "asymmetrical" balance of power – even if this balance seems frozen – is in itself a resource that can be seized at an opportune moment; that is, a moment when it appears profitable to recycle the past' (Mink, 2008, p. 477). Lviv's ambivalent role in the reconciliation process can be better understood in the context of various overlapping asymmetries, not only in Polish–Ukrainian history but also in the countries' current bilateral relations, as well as in Ukraine's domestic politics. Historically, Polish nationalism in Eastern Galicia was stronger than Ukrainian nationalism; the Ukrainians, unlike the Poles, failed to establish their own state in the interwar period. After the collapse of Communism, Poland emerged as a European state with a mature political opposition, a clear anti-Communist consensus and pro-European aspirations. On the contrary, post-Soviet Ukraine has been weak, dependent on Russia and internally divided. This asymmetry – and particularly its economic dimension, experienced by residents of the borderlands in their everyday lives – has only increased with the accession of Poland to NATO and the EU. Ukraine's exclusion from EU integration frustrated the Lviv proponents of a 'Polish path' and proved in their eyes the political failure of the Ukrainian leadership. It strengthened the feeling of yet another asymmetry – between the pro-Western Halycyna, which has little influence on Ukrainian politics, and the Sovietized, 'pro-Russian' East, whose oligarchs are the *de facto* rulers of the country.

The Polish–Ukrainian conflict, which is an important element of collective memory in Poland, remains little known in Ukraine, except for its western regions, and of little interest to the Kyiv government. Moreover, in Poland the interests of the victims and their descendants are represented by a strong lobby, including the Association for the Commemoration of Victims of the Ukrainian Nationalists. Polish state politics of memory in general is better institutionalized (e.g. through the

Institute of National Remembrance and the Council for the Protection of Struggle and Martyrdom Sites), a fact that is seen by the Ukrainian nationalists both as a threat and an example to follow. Little wonder that the reconciliation ‘from above’ between Warsaw and Kyiv was observed with some mistrust from Lviv, which felt underrepresented and dominated by Kyiv politicians ignorant of Polish–Ukrainian history. It was the Orange Revolution that Lviv saw as a chance for a ‘truly Ukrainian leadership’ to protect national interests inside the country and in relation to its neighbors. While the Polish side (and the Ukrainian liberal intellectuals) perceived the event as a new impulse for reconciliation, from the Lviv nationalists’ point of view the new political constellation in Kyiv offered a chance to overcome the traditional asymmetry in Ukrainian–Polish relations.

The Eaglets’ Cemetery in Lviv 2002–05

The conflict around the Polish military cemetery in Lviv, also known as the Eaglets’ Cemetery (*Cmentarz Orląt Lwowskich*) can scarcely be understood without taking into account Ukraine’s internal political crisis and the anti-Kuchma attitude of Lviv’s elites and population. The memorial to the ‘Polish defenders of Lviv’, which included a monumental cemetery complex and a Glory Monument, was constructed in the 1920s and became an important *lieu de mémoire* for Poland. During the post-war decades the cemetery was abandoned and partly destroyed. In the early 1990s, its restoration, initiated by private individuals, was supported by the Polish government and approved by the Ukrainian central authorities (see Photo 10.1). The official inauguration of the memorial site was supposed to demonstrate the Ukrainian–Polish partnership; however, it was postponed for years because of some disagreements about the details of the memorial’s design as well as the wording of the inscription. Characteristically, the main controversy emerged not between Kyiv and Warsaw, but between Kyiv and Lviv. The Lviv city council objected to the symbolism of the memorial, considered to be an expression of ‘Polish militarism’. It insisted that it would not permit the re-inauguration of a Polish cemetery glorifying the Polish Army on Ukrainian territory. The conflict culminated in the spring of 2002, when the planned meeting of presidents Kuchma and Kwaśniewski had to be canceled because no compromise could be found.

From the point of view of the Lviv city council, the memorial represented a powerful symbol of Polish presence in Lviv and a



Photo 10.1 The Eaglets' cemetery in Lviv.

Source: (© T. Zhurzhenko)

symbolic claim for its Polish identity. This attitude was based on deeply rooted stereotypes of the older generation, which grew up with family memories of war violence. However, the anti-Polish resentment was not the main motive for the Lviv city council's reservations. Rather, Lviv politicians used this opportunity to present themselves as true Ukrainian patriots and, at the same time, to sabotage the policies of President Kuchma, extremely unpopular in Western Ukraine. Apart from obvious populism, the Lviv city council deputies were angry that a decision so symbolically important for the city was made in Kyiv by people evidently ignorant about the past and without consultations with the local community. Moreover, the Lviv city council felt it would be humiliating to submit to the pressure of the Polish side: the main Polish representative in the Lviv conflict, Secretary of the Council for the Protection of Struggle and Martyrdom Sites Andrzej Przewoźnik, was endowed with significant power, incomparable to the weak position of his Ukrainian counterpart.

The atmosphere was changed by a small group from Lviv's liberal intelligentsia: the former dissident Myroslav Marynovych, the editor of the cultural magazine *Ji Taras Vozniak*, the historian Yaroslav Hrytsak and some others who were critical of the rigidity of the city council as well as of Kyiv's lack of sensitivity. Having long-established contacts with Polish intellectuals and liberal politicians, they initiated an informal reconciliation on the local community level. On 1 November 2002, the Catholic religious holiday of All Souls, an informal meeting in the Ukrainian Catholic University was followed by a joint mass celebrated at

the Polish military cemetery by the cardinals of both the Roman and the Greek Catholic Churches (Hrytsak, 2004, p. 133). The event was planned as strictly informal – state officials from both sides were asked to remain among the attendees. Ecumenical services have become a tradition and are attended every year by both Poles and Ukrainians.

The conflict over the Eaglets' memorial in Lviv became a site of internal political struggle, first of all between the presidential administration, which tried to monopolize the symbolic capital of Polish–Ukrainian reconciliation, and its political opponents, particularly from Western Ukraine. While Kuchma needed the reconciliation to maintain his European image and reclaim the legitimacy of his regime after numerous scandals, his opponents denied his right as a former Communist *nomenklatura* member to represent the Ukrainian nation and apologize on behalf of it. Eventually the conflict was resolved, and the official reopening of the memorial took place in July 2005 under the auspices of Aleksander Kwaśniewski and the newly elected Viktor Yushchenko. That a compromise between the Kyiv and Lviv city councils was reached was certainly due to the high degree of support that the new president enjoyed in Western Ukraine.

At the same time, as a symbolic counterbalance to the impressive Polish memorial, the Ukrainian side started a major reconstruction and expansion of the neighboring Memorial to the Warriors of the Ukrainian Galician Army (see Photo 10.2). Not only have the old graves been renovated, but the remains of other Ukrainian fighters for independence from 1918 to 1950, most notably the UPA, have been reburied here. With the reburial of some military and political leaders of the ZUNR, the graveyard has become a kind of regional pantheon of national heroes, underscoring the legitimacy of the Ukrainian claim on Lviv. This counter-project corresponded with one of President Yushchenko's main political projects – the rehabilitation and heroization of the UPA as freedom fighters.

Pawłokoma 2006

Because of Yushchenko's engagement, the Lviv city council had finally agreed to concessions concerning the Eaglets' Cemetery, but it was still not happy about the final outcome. The common view of the city council and the local public was that the process should be reciprocal and the Ukrainian graves in Poland should be finally given proper attention by the Ukrainian state. An agreement from 1994 between Ukraine and Poland was supposed to regulate the restoration and maintenance of the graves of the victims of war and political repressions, and in



Photo 10.2 The memorial to the warriors of the Ukrainian Galician Army in Lviv.
Source: (© T. Zhurzhenko)

1999, it was supplemented by a list of 40 former Ukrainian settlements on Polish territory that required care. But very little work had been done, and that mainly by local Ukrainian activists. The conflict with the Poles taught the Ukrainians a lesson: the Polish state pursued national

interests in the issue of historical memory incomparably more efficiently than the Ukrainian government. The new, ‘truly’ Ukrainian president was expected to change this situation. Zenovii Siryk, secretary of the city council, noted in 2005:

We had a state, but it was not Ukrainian.... We knew it was this bastard Kuchma, and we did not expect anything good from him. This was a stupidly un-Ukrainian central government.... We were on defence on two fronts: on the Polish and on the Ukrainian one. Now we have a new central government, to whom we should pass the relay. And we are ready to help.⁴

One condition of the compromise on the Eaglets’ Cemetery was that the Polish side would agree to the construction of a Ukrainian memorial in the village of Pawłokoma, site of the massacre of more than 300 Ukrainian civilians. Situated 40 km from the Polish–Ukrainian border, Pawłokoma today has 500 residents, all of them Poles. But before the war it had a population of 1200, about 900 of them Greek Catholic Ukrainians. In March 1945, when the Soviet front had already passed, a unit of Polish partisans shot 365 local Ukrainians dead. The massacre was reported in detail by Petro Potichnyj, a Ukrainian émigré historian and UPA veteran, in his book on his home village Pawłokoma (Potichnyj, 2001). As in many other cases the Polish version of this event is rather different: the local historian Zdzisław Konieczny argues that the massacre was retaliation for numerous killings of Poles from Pawłokoma and neighboring villages committed by the UPA (Konieczny, 2000).

In the early 1990s local Ukrainians and activists from the *Nadsiannia* association of Ukrainian expellees in the Lviv region made the initial attempts to tidy up the neglected Ukrainian cemetery and erected three metal crosses. These first actions faced the resistance of the Dynów district authorities and the local residents, but after some years the annual memorial mass on the former Ukrainian cemetery has become a tradition. As Pawłokoma was officially chosen as the next station in the process of Ukrainian–Polish reconciliation, the surrounding territory was put in order and a new granite memorial was installed, listing the names of the Ukrainian victims (see Photo 10.3). On 13 May 2006, the memorial was inaugurated in the presence of Viktor Yushchenko and Lech Kaczyński. The word ‘crime’ (in singular, referring only to the particular case of Pawłokoma) was used by Kaczyński in his speech. Shown on Polish TV, the ceremony drew attention to the fact that, at the time, the Poles were not only the victims, but in some cases also



Photo 10.3 The memorial to the Ukrainian victims in Pawłokoma.
Source: (© T. Zhurzhenko)

the perpetrators. As the first officially inaugurated monument to the Ukrainian victims on Polish territory, it is of great importance for Polish society and the Ukrainian community in Poland.

The Pawłokoma commemoration could only happen because the image of the Ukrainians had improved significantly after the Orange Revolution, and the Poles had high expectations for Yushchenko. Moreover, the two presidents enjoyed a very good personal relationship and shared similar ideological views. Still, this reconciliatory act was certainly not easy for Lech Kaczyński, whose Catholic and nationalist electorate was not happy with the idea of Polish guilt. As a concession to the Polish nationalists, a memorial cross to the local Polish victims was installed near the new Catholic Church (see Photo 10.4). While the inscription on the Ukrainian memorial is not at all explicit about the perpetrators, saying that the victims ‘tragically lost their lives in the village of Pawłokoma on 1–3 March 1945’, the inscription on the Polish memorial reads as follows: ‘To the memory of the Poles, residents of the village Pawłokoma, who in 1939–1945 suffered death from Ukrainian nationalists.’ Thus, the memorial site, designed to demonstrate the



Photo 10.4 The memorial to the Polish victims in Pawłokoma.

Source: © T. Zhurzhenko

good will of the Polish and Ukrainian nations for reconciliation and forgiveness, in fact reproduces the two incompatible national narratives of suffering. No wonder that the Ukrainian activists and local politicians in Lviv perceived the Polish memorial cross as yet another humiliation. In order not to irritate the Ukrainian guests, the words ‘suffered death from Ukrainian nationalists’ were covered during the official ceremony with a stripe in Polish national colors.

Huta Pieniacka – 2009

The next station in the Polish–Ukrainian reconciliation process became Huta Pieniacka, in the Lviv region (Brody district), a village where on 28 February 1944, about 1000 Polish inhabitants, almost the entire population, were murdered. The official commemoration of the 65th anniversary of the massacre was organized by *Stowarzyszenie Huta Pieniacka*, an association of survivors and their descendants. Meant to demonstrate the continuing process of reconciliation between the two nations, the event was officially attended by presidents Lech Kaczyński and Viktor Yushchenko. However, even more than in the Pawłokoma

case, the commemoration revealed hidden controversies and unsettled questions.

In the late 1990s the Head Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation conducted thorough research on the massacre of Huta Pieniacka, interviewing 80 witnesses and studying archival documents. The Commission concluded that in light of the established facts 'there is no doubt that the 4th battalion "Galizien" of the 14th division of SS⁵ committed the crime.'⁶ Ukrainian historians usually deny the direct involvement of the SS Galizien or any other Ukrainian units in the crime.⁷

An initial memorial to the massacre of Huta Pieniacka was erected during the Soviet era; the official narrative condemned the Nazis and Ukrainian collaborators for this crime. As early as the 1990s, Polish activists installed simple metal crosses here. In early 2005 a new Polish memorial was erected at this site, though without consultations or the official permission of the local Ukrainian authorities. The planned official commemoration of the 65th anniversary of the massacre stirred up a wave of emotions in Lviv. At the roundtable 'Huta Pieniacka: truth and fiction' held in 2009 in Lviv, local historians, civic activists and politicians spoke about the necessity of official excavations and further research before any version of the story could be legitimized as the final truth.⁸ Some local politicians saw the commemorations as yet another attempt by the Polish side to impose its vision of history on the Ukrainian nation. Rostyslav Novozhenets and Ostap Kosak, the BYUT deputies to the regional assembly, required the Polish side to officially disclaim Ukrainian responsibility for the massacre before the official meeting of the Ukrainian and Polish presidents. They argued that under such circumstances an official visit of the Ukrainian president to Huta Pieniacka would damage the political image of Ukraine and legitimize the illegal construction of the memorial by the Poles. More sober and pragmatic voices, however, stressed that each side has a right to commemorate its dead and that the massacre of Huta Pieniacka was an undeniable crime.

The most aggressive position was taken by Svoboda, a right-wing nationalist party, which had gained popularity among the radicalized part of the local electorate frustrated by Yushchenko. Svoboda went so far as to demonstrate against the official commemoration in close proximity to the memorial and simultaneously with the event. During Kaczyński's speech the radicals tried to disturb the ceremony by loudly singing the Ukrainian anthem. The fact that some Svoboda deputies in the regional council were from the Brody district might provide an

additional explanation to this populist action. As reported by the news agency Zaxid.net, local Svoboda activists from Brody installed an information board not far from the memorial in Huta Pieniacka with their own interpretations of the events. The inscription stressed that ‘during the Second World War Huta Pieniacka was one of the largest bases of Polish guerillas and Bolshevik saboteur units in Galicia, which jointly terrorized nearby Ukrainian villages.’ It further claimed that Huta Pieniacka was ‘destroyed by German occupation authorities during a military operation’ and that ‘in the beginning of the 1980s Soviet–Polish propaganda disseminated a false version claiming that the annihilation of the village was done by the SS Galizien and OUN–UPA fighters.’⁹

Despite all these controversies and obstacles, both Yushchenko and Kaczyński came to Huta Pieniacka and spoke about the need for reconciliation over a difficult past. The questions of the identity of the perpetrators and of responsibility were not addressed; according to Viktor Yushchenko, both Ukrainians and Poles fell victim to the massacre. Kaczyński emphasized that the tragedy of Huta Pieniacka would not have happened ‘without the permission and inspiration of third parties – two murderous totalitarian states’ that led to a situation in which two nations oppressed by them ‘became hostile towards each other’.¹⁰ After the commemoration in Huta Pieniacka, Yushchenko and Kaczyński laid down wreaths at the memorial to the Ukrainian victims of the NKVD in the nearby Brody, thus demonstrating their common view on the Communist past. From Kaczyński’s side, this was also a demonstration of solidarity with Yushchenko, whose politics of memory proved to be unpopular in Ukraine. Lech Kaczynski, too, was facing criticism in Europe and at home. The commemorative event in Huta Pieniacka was one of the last meetings of two political losers, who stayed faithful to each other and to their ideological commitments.

Conclusion

The collapse of Communism created good preconditions for Ukrainian–Polish reconciliation. For the first time in the long common history of Poles and Ukrainians, the Polish elites supported Ukrainian independence, while the Ukrainian society ceased to be anti-Polish. Both Ukraine and Poland are *status quo* states that do not seek border changes, and they have a common interest in European integration and security. Borrowing from other European reconciliation models and policies of pardon, pro-European political actors in both countries have shifted most of the responsibility for the past conflicts to the Communist

regime. But reconciliation is a mixture of normative politics and pragmatism and a multilayer process which includes not only presidents and parliaments, but also civil society and local communities. It is also a dynamic field where various interest groups perform their own politics of memory and often profit from re-enacting the conflict-ridden past.

The case of Lviv is particularly illuminative because of the ambivalent role that regional elites, municipal authorities and local politicians play in the reconciliation process. While using positive symbols and inclusive narratives of the past for developing cross-border cooperation and international promotion of their city or region, they re-activate conflictual collective memories with the aim of boosting local patriotism, provoking central authorities, securing electoral victory or compromising a rival. Such historicization strategies often draw on the social frustration of the local population and its feelings of injustice and discrimination related to domestic or international developments. Utilizing and challenging the power asymmetries between Poland and Ukraine, Kyiv and Lviv, Ukraine and Russia, Ukraine and the EU, 'commemorative entrepreneurs' seek to legitimize the desired change of the dominant memory regime.

Recent memorialization initiatives demonstrate that while satisfying a basic human need to honor those who suffered and died as a member of a particular community, memorialization often crystallizes a sense of victimization and exclusion of the 'other'. At the same time, it creates a new transnational space for debates, negotiations and the search for historical truth.

Acknowledgments

I am grateful to Yaroslav Hrytsak, Vasyl' Rasevych, Sofia Dyak, Ihor Balyns'ky and other Lviv colleagues for sharing their knowledge with me. Research was supported by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) [Project nr. V75-G14] and conducted with the assistance of the Center for Urban History in Lviv.

Notes

1. The Greek Catholic (Uniate) Church was established in 1596 by the Union of Brest and maintains allegiance to Rome while preserving the Eastern Orthodox rites.
2. As no words of apology were spoken in Pavlivka, the Polish side was disappointed. The democratic opposition in Ukraine criticized the reconciliation 'from above', deploring that the 'need for reconciliation was declared by a

- president, known for numerous political scandals, harassing the opposition and very low popularity' (Hrytsak, 2004, p. 134).
3. Since the local elections in October 2010 the radical nationalist party 'Svoboda' has dominated the Lviv city council.
 4. 'Ukrains'ki mohyly v Pol'shchi', *Lvivs'ka gazeta*, 7 July 2005.
 5. This division was made up mainly of Ukrainian volunteers from Galicia.
 6. 'Investigation into the crime committed at the village of Huta Pieniacka', 2003, <http://www.ipn.gov.pl>, accessed 8 August 2011.
 7. See the roundtable 'Huta Pieniacka: Nazi traces of the Polish tragedy of 1944', *Den*, 28 February 2009.
 8. 'Vcheni initsiuiut' arkhologichni rozkopky na misti znyshchenoho sela Huta Pieniacka', 29 October 2009, <http://ostro.org/news/article-73309/>, accessed 8 August 2011.
 9. 'Svoboda vstanovyla u Huti Pieniackiy na Lvivshchyni stend pravdy', 1 March 2010, <http://www.zaxid.net>, accessed 8 August 2011.
 10. 'The President: We want to restore the truth concerning the events', 28 February 2009, www.president.pl, accessed 8 August 2011.

References

- L. Gardner Feldman (1999) 'The principle and practice of "reconciliation" in German foreign policy: relations with France, Israel, Poland and the Czech Republic', *International Affairs*, 75(2): 333–56.
- Y. Hrytsak (2004) 'Tiazhke prymyrennia', in Y. Hrytsak (ed.), *Strasti za nationalismom* (Kyiv: Krytyka), pp. 126–37.
- G. Kasianov (2006) 'The burden of the past. The Ukrainian–Polish conflict of 1943–44 in contemporary public, academic and political debates in Ukraine and Poland', *Innovation*, 19(3–4): 247–59.
- Z. Konieczny (2000) *Był taki czas. U źródeł akcji odwetowej w Pawłokomie* (Przemyśl: Polskie Tow. Historyczne).
- G. Mink (2008) 'Between reconciliation and the reactivation of the past conflicts in Europe: Rethinking social memory paradigms', *Czech Sociological Review*, 44(3): 469–90.
- P. Potichnyj (2001) *Pawłokoma 1441–1945: Istoriiia sela* (Lviv and Toronto: Pawłokoma Foundation).
- T. Snyder (2003) *The Reconstruction of Nations. Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569–1999* (New Haven: Yale University Press).