

PREFACE

The year 2020 marks the 30th anniversary of the establishment of Polish-Ukrainian relations outside the control of the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This was possible because a non-communist government was formed in Poland after the elections of June 4, 1989, and the USSR was undergoing a process of structural reconstruction in the spirit of increasing the independence of the Soviet Union republics and their democratization.

The first Polish-Ukrainian relations were still unofficial. In September 1989, a delegation from the Independent Self-Governing Trade Union “Solidarity” took part in the first congress of the Ukrainian People’s Movement for Reconstruction. Then, on 4 and 5 May 1990, a Polish-Ukrainian meeting took place in Jabłonna. Already at that time, it was postulated that research teams should be established to objectively evaluate the common history, to abandon the cultivation of negative stereotypes, and to remove the existing obstacles on the way to Polish-Ukrainian cooperation.

The Polish parliament played a special role in building a friendly atmosphere around the Ukrainian aspirations for emancipation and then independence. The announcement of the declaration of sovereignty by the Verkhovna Rada (Supreme Council) of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR) on July 16, 1990 initiated a friendly debate in the Polish Senate, which resulted in the adoption of a resolution applauding the decision taken by the Ukrainians. The Sejm also adopted a declaration on this issue. Another important step in building good Polish-Ukrainian relations was the Senate’s resolution of August 3, 1990 condemning the Operation “Vistula”. The Senate passed it after a stormy debate and not without difficulty.

The policy of rapprochement with Ukraine was consistently implemented by the Polish government. On October 13 and 14,

1990, Minister of Foreign Affairs Krzysztof Skubiszewski visited Kiev to sign the *Polish-Ukrainian Declaration on the Principles and Basic Directions for the Development of Polish-Ukrainian Relations*. In December 1990, a delegation from the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs came to Warsaw and discussed a number of issues, including the problem of national minorities, the opening of cultural and information centres, the conclusion of a consular convention and an agreement on cooperation and youth exchange. As a result, Poland and Ukraine concluded many bilateral agreements, even before the collapse of the USSR and before the adoption of the declaration of independence by the Verkhovna Rada of the USSR on August 24, 1991. Mutual relations in the future were to be built on this foundation.

Thirty years after these events, the inevitable question is whether the elites of the two nations have persevered in their pursuit of cooperation on various levels in a spirit of mutual understanding. The Polish-Ukrainian conference, which took place (remotely) in November 2020 at the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences, was devoted to this issue, and the papers presented at it, although unfortunately not all, were included in this collection.

It opens with a paper by Paweł Skorut (*Ukraine in the Eastern Foreign Policy of Minister Krzysztof Skubiszewski. Between September 12, 1989 and October 26, 1993*), devoted to Polish-Ukrainian relations in the years 1990–1993, implemented at the government level. It provides a solid introduction to Polish-Ukrainian relations in the first years of independent Ukraine.

The next article (*Czesław Miłosz's reflections on the Political 'diseases' of the 20th century in the context of harmonizing bilateral relations between Poland and Ukraine*), by Volodymyr Horbatenko, shows the traps and threats that have appeared and are appearing in our part of Europe, and threaten Ukraine and Polish-Ukrainian relations. Inspired by the prose of Czesław Miłosz, the author points out the worst of them: dehumanization and the use of violence

against other people and entire nations, as well as against ethnic and religious groups; blurring the line between good and evil; enslavement of the human mind; erosion of national identity; extreme nationalism and pseudo-patriotism. The author presents them one by one with reference to the present situation in Ukraine and Polish-Ukrainian relations. He emphasises the danger of the collapse of European values and he reminds that the responsibility for this collapse stems not only from the decisions taken by politicians, but also from individual choices of ordinary people.

The Ukrainian debate on one of the most recognizable Polish monuments – the Cemetery of Eaglets – was the subject of the text of Iryna Matsyshyna (*'Eaglets' Cemetery debate in the context of Ukraine's political discourse*). The author presented several phases of the debate taking place in Ukraine around this necropolis over the years. In 2002, it concerned the inscriptions placed during the restoration of the cemetery; in 2005, the symbolism behind the image of Szczerbiec was discussed; in 2015, the dispute was provoked by the return of the statues of two lions to the Cemetery; in 2017, the debate was triggered by the proposal of the Polish minister of internal affairs and administration, Mariusz Błaszczak, to place an image from the Cemetery on the cards of Polish passports. In her very interesting text, the author shows also the role of the Lviv city authorities in heating up this debate, which is harmful not only to Polish-Ukrainian relations, but above all to historical truth.

In the next paper (*The 2015–2017 Polish-Ukrainian Forum of Historians and its results*), Waldemar Rezmer writes about the importance of historical truth in Polish-Ukrainian relations and the difficulties that historians encounter when trying to establish it. This is a very factual text showing the circumstances of the establishment of the historical seminar “Poland – Ukraine: difficult questions”, operating in 1996–2008, and the Polish-Ukrainian Historical Forum, which was active in the years 2015–2017. W. Rezmer shows how extra-scientific pressures have undermined historians' efforts

to explain the past. The results of the work of the Historical Forum could harm the UPA's national myth that was being forced through in Ukraine at the time, which is why the deliberations of the Forum were closed. The author's conclusions are pessimistic: as long as political goals are more important than historical truth, cooperation between Polish and Ukrainian historians will not be possible.

While Waldemar Rezmer emphasizes the importance of facts in the Polish-Ukrainian dialogue, Leonid Zashkilnyak focuses on their interpretation, emphasizing the need for mutual understanding of the arguments of the other side. He points to the most glaring differences in the Polish and Ukrainian interpretations of the events of 1918–1920 and of the Second World War. He criticizes the Polish side for the lack of understanding of the fact, obvious to Ukrainians, that their constant aspiration in the 20th century was to build an independent state, and that the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (the UPA) was the vehicle of these aspirations. He believes that the concepts used in Polish historiography build a positive image of Poles as victims of massacres, and a negative image of Ukrainians, who appear at most as victims of retaliatory actions. He calls for an objective application of concepts.

Leonid Zashkilnyak's text undoubtedly stirs up emotions and a desire to engage in polemics. The UPA's struggle for an independent Ukrainian state seems understandable, but its glorification cannot gain Polish acceptance, since it was carried out by cruel ethnic cleansing in the territories inhabited by the Polish population. Nevertheless, Leonid Zashkilnyak's text is important because it allows us to understand the arguments of the other side and its expectations towards Poland.

The text written by Oksana Kukuruz (*The role of scientific consulting in the process of forming a good neighbourhood policy between Ukraine and Poland*) is reassuring and free from emotion. The author proposes to create a good practice of scientific advice on issues of historical policy. Such good practice needs to be used by politicians

and parliamentarians who, both in Poland and in Ukraine, tend to accept the interpretation of historical events guided by their own views and preferences rather than by the search for objective truth. The author precedes her conclusions with a theoretical analysis of what the policy of good neighbourhood is, with reference to the *Polish-Ukrainian Treaty on Good Neighbourhood, Friendly Relations and Cooperation*, signed in 1992.

Another approach to the problems of the neighbourhood was demonstrated in the work of Alla Kyrydon and Serhiy Troyan (*The Ukrainian-Polish borderland as a heterogeneous sociodynamic space*). The authors presented theoretical models of the borderland and made an attempt to relate them to the present Polish-Ukrainian borderland.

The collection closes with a text by Włodzimierz Osadczy concerning the state of material relics of the Polish presence in Ukraine. The author reviewed religious buildings (in Sokal, Stara Sil, Komarno, and Chemeryntsi), as well as castles, palaces and other buildings (in Berezhan, Pomorian, Tartakiv, Chervonohrad, Khyriv). He showed their very bad condition and negligence. The lack of care for their protection is seen as a continuation of the policy dating back to the 19th century, the aim of which was to destroy all traces of Latin culture in this area. This is still happening with the inaction of the Polish and Ukrainian governments.

The predominance of texts on historical memory testifies to the importance of this problem in Polish-Ukrainian relations. A shift away from scientific historical research in favour of escalating feelings of harm does not bode well for the future. It builds a negative image of both nations. The longer this continues, the more difficult it will be to re-establish a substantive historical dialogue. Polish thinking about Ukraine and Ukrainian thinking about Poland reduced to considering the accounts of mutual harm will make it impossible in the long run to see the common goals that Poland and Ukraine should have in the united Europe.

However, a precondition for dialogue and cooperation is to be open to the arguments of the other side. For this reason, we encourage you to read this small volume in order to better understand Polish and Ukrainian narratives.

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