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**THE POLISH
CULTURAL-CIVILIZATIONAL
LEGACY IN UKRAINE:
HISTORIES, CONDITIONS,
AND PROSPECTS
FOR THE FUTURE
(ON THE EXAMPLE
OF THE LVIV
ARCHDIOCESE)**

Abstract

Numerous monuments of Polish culture have remained on the territory of today's Ukraine. These are mainly churches, castles and palaces. Today many of them are in a state of ruin or progressive destruction. The article presents the selected examples of the terrifying destruction of cultural monuments in the 21st century. They indicate the large scale of the phenomenon as well as the lack of firm attempts to resist destruction. A thesis can be made about the appearance of the clash of civilizations in this phenomenon and the consent to such a state of affairs. The lack of a firm reaction of the Polish state to a given situation proves a deep moral and political crisis.

Keywords

Culture, Church, Fortress, Palace, Civilization, Catholicism.

Introduction

Polish culture in the East, also known as borderland culture,¹ is inextricably linked with the progress of Latin civilization in the area of the Byzantine-Ruthenian tradition. It was not the pockets of Polish settlement which emerged alongside Polish colonization in Ruthenia and Lithuania that determined the power of the Polish element, but the presence of the Church in social life. Adam Mickiewicz in his reflections for lectures in French university lecture halls wrote:

But what was the power that moved the Polish nationality and pushed it to the Ruthenian Lands? What was that power which repulsed the speech and nationality of the Ruthenians as far as over the Dnieper? This force did not originate in Poland itself, it came from afar, and was the result of a coincidence of many circumstances which seemingly had no connection with Polish history. The Church took upon itself the work of spreading the Polish language. [...] The Polish language first took its place at the altar, became the language of prayer, and then the language spoken at home.²

As the social and state structures of the Kingdom of Poland developed in the eastern Russo Lithuanian lands, fortresses, palaces and educational buildings became – in addition to churches – permanent monuments of great artistic and historical value. For cen-

1. The concept of 'borderland' is inextricably linked with Polish culture, and includes not only geographic and historical terms, but also a cultural space characterized by a strong mythological and emotional charge. In the mid-19th century, the term 'Kresy' ('Borderland') came to be associated with the eastern borderlands of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Source: *Encyklopedia Kresów* [Encyclopedia of the Borderland], (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Kluszczyński, n.d.), 9.

2. A. Mickiewicz, *Pisma Adama Mickiewicza* [The Writings of Adam Mickiewicz], vol. VII (Warszawa: S. H. Merzbach, 1858), 54–55.

turies, these were tangible traces of the presence of Western civilization, also known as Latin civilization, in these lands.

Due to the characteristics of the borderlands, which were constantly exposed to clashes with foreign elements, the sacred buildings, defensive structures, and palaces erected there were characterized by a solid style of workmanship, a characteristic grandeur, and imagination reflecting the fortunes of the borderland magnates, nobility, and also the generous owners of the magnificent Houses of God. The same brawler magnates, stirring up social and political relations in lands far from the reach of royal sanction, immortalized themselves in the cultural field by building monumental works of art: churches, monasteries, orthodox churches, palaces, and monuments, creating charitable foundations.³

After the partitions of Poland, the unity of the Latin culture in the eastern lands became even closer, both in the Russian and Austrian partition. The Latin Catholicism as a feature of Polishness was being systematically and uncompromisingly exterminated in the tsars' state, as a trace of 'foreign rule' in the territories which were the heritage of the Orthodox Russian tsar. In Galicia, the fight against Latinism became the founding myth of the Rusyn national movement, which emerged in the mid-19th century and based its nationality on the traditions of the Eastern Orthodox Church.

In the 20th century, Latin churches in the territories that make up modern Ukraine (excluding the territories of the former Subcarpathian Ruthenia) were unequivocally associated with the legacy of Polish culture. Clearly, Polish manors, or fortresses built by Polish noble families and inscribed in Polish history and culture, were associated with lofty or dramatic events in Polish history.

Throughout history, these monuments have been exposed to constant devastation. On the one hand, as defensive objects, at

3. A. Czołowski, B. Janusz, *Przeszłość i zabytki województwa tarnopolskiego* [Past and Monuments of the Ternopil Voivodeship] (Tarnopol: Powiatowa Organizacja Narodowa w Tarnopolu, 1926), 41.

which the blows of hostile powers were naturally aimed, on the other hand, the devastation was the result of ideological and philosophical struggle, which removed the traces of foreign domination in the areas that were considered their own.

Churches and religious buildings

The devastations that brought destruction to Polish monuments in the East in the course of history are a phenomenon connected with the ruin caused by wars and the intentional anti-Polish and anti-Christian activities of totalitarian systems. It is known that as part of Stalinist repressions all Catholic churches in the so-called Soviet Ukraine were closed. A considerable part of them was annihilated. In later times, after the thaw, due to specific circumstances it was possible to partially revive religious life in these areas. The basis for this was the fact that despite the repressions and Stalinist purges there remained dense areas inhabited by the Polish population, which, because of its peasant nature, did not have to deny its nationality and faith.

In view of the complexity of this issue, I would like to turn our attention to the situation of Catholic churches in the territories of the Lviv archdiocese that, after the Soviet annexation, became part of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. They include a large part of the former archdiocese, as well as fragments of the former dioceses of Przemyśl and Lutsk. The remnants of a dense ecclesiastical network found themselves in areas devoid of clergy and believers, subjected to total depolonization due to the policy of the Stalinist regime, which consistently destroyed the Polish element both through repression and through orders related to the expatriation of borderland Poles. The Polish population in the former Eastern Lesser Poland suffered enormous losses due to the genocide committed by Ukrainian nationalist formations.⁴

4. The fact that genocide was committed is acknowledged by authoritative scientific, legal and political bodies in Poland.

The postwar destruction of Catholic churches became a planned phenomenon due to the neglect of abandoned religious buildings and the ill will of the communist authorities. Of the more than four hundred parishes that had existed within the boundaries of the Lviv archdiocese prior to the 1939 Soviet occupation, a negligible number remained, amounting to 1.8% of the pre-war state.⁵ This was pointed out by Bishop Marcyan Trofimiak, the former bishop of Lutsk and a witness to the faith as well as a tireless priest during the Communist era:

Religious life almost disappeared. In the whole of the Lviv archdiocese, only 13 churches remain in use: the cathedral and St. Anthony's Church in Lviv, and churches in Zolochiv, Stryj, Sambor, Dobromil, Nowe Miasto, Mostyska and Shchyrets. In the Ternopil voivodeship, only 3 churches were active: in Borshchiv, Galushchintsy and the only surviving church of the Lutsk diocese in Kremenets, which as a result of border shifts was placed in the Ternopil voivodeship. In Bukovina the only church in Chernivtsi functioned. Not a single church survived in the Stanislawow voivodeship.⁶

The fall of communism and the proclamation of an independent Ukrainian state brought new hope for the continuation of the Latin

5. R. Dzwonkowski, *Polacy na dawnych Kresach wschodnich. Z problematyki narodowościowej i religijnej* [Poles in the former Eastern Borderlands. On ethnic and religious issues] (Lublin: Oddział Lubelski Stowarzyszenia „Wspólnota Polska”, 1994), 49.

6. M. Trofimiak, “Świadectwo archidiecezji lwowskiej obrządku łacińskiego (Ukraina)” [Testimony of the Lviv Latin Rite Archdiocese (Ukraine)], [in:] *Świadectwa Kościoła katolickiego w systemie totalitarnym Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej. Księga Kongresu Teologicznego Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej* [Testimonies of the Catholic Church in the Totalitarian System of East Central Europe. Book of the Theological Congress of Central and Eastern Europe], Lublin, August 11–15, 1991, ed. J. Nagórny, B. Jurczyk, J. S. Gajek et al. (Lublin: Catholic University of Lublin, 1994), 211.

Church and the preservation of its churches. Some of the churches were handed over to the faithful, but many were seized by other confessions or used by state offices. No church in Lviv was handed over to the Catholics as had been demanded by the believers.

The churches that were not handed over to the faithful because of the lack of good will or because of the lack of believers experience a cruel fate, and sometimes the blow that they experienced in the conditions of 'freedom' became for them the end of a centuries-old life, a destruction that could have been avoided both in the times of wars and at the hands of atheistic godlessness. The ruin of Latin churches in the territory of the Lviv archdiocese is a common phenomenon, a kind of 'norm' of today. First of all the victims are the temples built at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries in places with small Polish population. However, the destruction of ancient churches of great historical and cultural value also takes place. We will present here selected examples that illustrate the scale of this phenomenon quite clearly.

The Sanctuary of Mother of God of Sokal in the 17th-century Bernardine monastery in Sokal was considered one of the oldest and most venerated places of Marian devotion in old Poland. The miraculous painting of the Mother of God of Sokal dates back to the times of King Władysław Jagiełło.⁷ The complex of the Bernardine monastery and church was considered Sokal's most valuable monument. After World War II, in 1951, the church equipment was taken to Lezajsk, and the miraculous painting of the Mother of God of Sokal was placed in the Bernardine monastery in Stradom in Kraków. Currently the painting is located in Hrubieszów. During the Soviet era, the monastery housed a heavy prison, which existed throughout the period of Ukrainian independence.⁸ In 2010, during the Eas-

7. A. Fridrich, *Historie cudownych obrazów Najświętszej Maryi Panny w Polsce* [Stories of miraculous images of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Poland], vol. 2 (Kraków: Tow. Jez., 1904), 292.

8. G. Rąkowski, *Ziemia Lwowska. Przewodnik krajoznawczo-historyczny po Zachodniej Ukrainie* [Lviv Region. A Sightseeing-Historical Guide to Western Ukraine] (Pruszków: Oficyna Wydawnicza Rewasz, 2007), 195.

ter period, Archbishop of Lviv Mieczysław Mokrzycki visited the prison. He talked with the prison authorities about the renovation of the temple. He was the first chaplain in the history of the prison to enter the ward for people sentenced to life imprisonment. “Unfortunately, nothing was done to change this situation and to properly protect the monument from fire. Today it has been completely destroyed”, noted Rev. Andrzej Mihułka, then pastor in Sokal. The former sanctuary in Sokal burned to the ground on March 27, 2012.⁹

The brick *church of St. Michael the Archangel* in Stara Sil was built over the years. The oldest part, the chapel of St. Anne, comes from the mid-14th century, the newest, the chapel of the Holy Trinity, from the interwar period of the 20th century. The beauty and richness of the temple is evidenced by the large stone sculptures of the Evangelists at the outer walls of the building. The architecture of the temple reflects a unique combination of Renaissance and Art Deco, making a great aesthetic impression due to the majesty and harmony of plastic shapes. The reconstruction of the Stara Sil church in the 1930s received recognition from the Holy See, and the chairman of the parish committee, Henryk Krzemieniecki, was awarded the medal “Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice”.¹⁰

Today the building is in a poor condition. After World War II, the communists arranged a warehouse here. In the 1970s, a huge

9. “Spłonął bernardyński klasztor w Sokalu” [The Bernardine Monastery in Sokal Burned Down], accessed September 8, 2020, <https://wolyn.org/index.php/wiesci-z-wolynia/401-spon-bernardyski-klasztor-w-sokalu.html>; K. Czawa-ga, “Spłonął jeden z najpiękniejszych klasztorów na Kresach” [One of the Most Beautiful Monasteries in the Borderlands Burned Down], *Kurier Galicyjski*, no. 6 (154), 2012, 1.

10. P. Krasny, “Kościół parafialny p.w. św. Michała Archanioła w Starej Soli” [Parish Church of St. Michael the Archangel in Stara Sil], [in:] *Materiały do dziejów sztuki sakralnej na Ziemiach Wschodnich dawnej Rzeczypospolitej. Kościoły i klasztory rzymskokatolickie dawnego województwa ruskiego* [Materials for the History of Sacral Art in the Eastern Territories of the Former Republic of Poland. Roman Catholic Churches and Monasteries of the Former Ruskie Voivodship], ed. J. Ostrowski (Kraków: MCK, 1997), 252.

fire broke out. Almost all equipment burned down. In addition, firefighters used water from brine to extinguish the fire, which later accelerated the deterioration of the walls. In the 1990s, the reconstruction began, but it progressed very slowly, mainly due to lack of funds.¹¹ Currently, there is a Roman Catholic parish here, but it is unable to bear the financial burden of restoring the church. In 2001, Pope John Paul II gave his blessing to the renovation work, but since then, nothing has moved in the matter of the church's reconstruction – broken windows haunt you, trees grow under the roof, and fragments of decorations pile up in the courtyard.¹² The object is gradually being destroyed.

The parish church of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary in Komarno is one of the oldest and most beautiful churches of the Lviv archdiocese. Founded in the 15th century, and transformed into a beautiful Baroque building in 1656, it has been the destination of numerous pilgrimages because of the miraculous painting of the Mother of God of the Rosary. After the devastation in the communist era, the church was handed over to its rightful owners, Catholics of the Latin rite, in 1992, but soon the local authorities handed the temple over to the Greek Catholic parish. The Catholic believers were expelled to a small chapel-tomb of Fr. Władysław Frydel in the cemetery.¹³

“Greek Catholics have two churches there, yet they seized our historic 17th century church”, explained Rev. Ph.D. Michał Bajcar, who commutes there from Horodok. The priest recounts

11. “Piękny, polski kościół w Starej Soli na Kresach woła o pomoc” [A Beautiful Polish Church in Stara Sil in the Borderlands Cries out for Help], accessed October 29, 2020, <https://nowiny24.pl/piekny-polski-kosciol-w-starej-soli-na-kresach-wola-o-pomoc-wideo/ar/12079062>.

12. “Stara Sól. Kościół Św. Michała” [Stara Sil. Church of St. Michael], accessed October 29, 2020, <https://lwow.info/stara-sol-kosciol-sw-michala/>.

13. K. Skowyra, “Kościół parafialny p.w. Narodzenia Najświętszej Panny Maryi w Komarnie” [Parish Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Komarno], *Radość Wiary*, no. 5 (41), 2004, 20.

that during this winter (2012), when the cold reached minus 30 degrees, he was forced to confess his parishioners at the chapel. “Meanwhile, our church was closed at that time because Greek Catholics were praying in their church – said Roman Catholics from Komarno. – They rarely use our temple, which used to be a pearl for the whole area, but now is falling into ruin because few Greek Catholics come there. We cannot understand where their hatred comes from, after all we are in one Catholic Church. We still pray in the chapel in the cemetery, but we will continue to fight for the return of our church”.¹⁴ Unlawfully seized by the Greek Catholic community, the church has received no thoughtful attention from its new owners. Rev. Bajcar claims that the historic church from the 17th century is in a very dilapidated condition – the roof is leaking, the windows have holes.¹⁵ Finally, in 2016, there was a fire that largely consumed the interior of the temple.¹⁶

An unprecedented desecration of the temple occurred in 2020, when as a result of archaeological work in the crypts of the church, some of the bones of the deceased, along with material from the excavation, were taken near the local cemetery and thrown away. This caused outrage and intervention by the local community and Polish activists. The work was halted, and the Ukrainian police launched an investigation into the possible desecration. Borderland activists have also launched a petition, calling

14. K. Czawaga, “Grekokatolicy blokują kościół w Komarnie” [Greek Catholics block the church in Komarno], accessed December 7, 2020, <https://kuriergalityjski.com/index.php/polemikii/271-grekokatolicy-blokuj-koci-w-komarnie>.

15. K. Czawaga, “Kościół niezgody” [The Church of Discord], accessed December 7, 2020, <https://kuriergalityjski.com/rozmaitosci/2737-ko-ci-niezgody>.

16. “Ukraina: Pożar uszkodził kościół w Komarnie, bezprawnie zagarnięty przez Ukraińców” [Ukraine: Fire Damaged the Church in Komarno, Illegally Seized by Ukrainians], accessed December 3, 2020, <https://kresy.pl/wydarzenia/ukraina-pozar-uszkodzil-kosciol-w-komarnie-bezprawnie-zagarniete-przez-ukraincow-foto/>.

for a calming of tensions between the two faiths and for concrete actions to resolve the crisis.¹⁷

An example of profanation and blasphemy can be found in the building of the *St. Stanisław Kostka church in Chemeryntsi* near Dunaiv, the former residence of the Latin archbishops of Lviv. After the war, the church in Chemeryntsi was used to house kolkhoz offices and a post office, and for a long time there was no chance of restoring it to worship. In 1995, the ruined temple was given to Greek Catholics, who were supposed to create a Sunday school for religious instruction. The plan was not carried out, and since the area was not fenced, rams, horses and cows invaded the church. In recent years the deteriorating church was turned into a stable. Later it was leased to sheep farmers. In addition to the church, the churchyard was also ruined.¹⁸ It took Rev. Piotr Smolka nine years to fight to get it back.¹⁹

The above-mentioned cases of neglect, devastation and also – which can be neither explained nor justified – profanation of not only cultural monuments, but also sacral objects, called in our tradition ‘Houses of God’, reveal only the tip of the iceberg, under which there is hidden the phenomenon of a massive and irreparable de-

17. “W kościele w Komarnie wstrzymano prace archeologiczne. Ukrainńska policja prowadzi dochodzenie w sprawie profanacji” [Archaeological Work has Stopped in the Church in Komarno. Ukrainian Police are Investigating the Profanation], accessed November 29, 2020, <https://kresy.pl/wydarzenia/w-kościele-w-komarnie-wstrzymano-prace-archeologiczne-ukrainaska-policja-prowodzi-dochodzenie-ws-profanacji/>.

18. “Ukraina: Polacy odzyskali kościół Ciemierzyńcach – wcześniej służył za stajnię” [Ukraine: Poles Recovered the Church in Chemeryntsi – it was previously used as a stable], accessed November 20, 2020, <https://kresy.pl/wydarzenia/ukraina-polacy-odzyskali-kosciol-w-ciemierzyncach-wczesniej-sluzyl-za-stajnie-foto/>.

19. K. Cwołek, “Relikwie św. Stanisława z Rzymu przez Gliwice trafiły do Ciemierzyń na Ukrainie” [Relics of St. Stanisław Arrived from Rome via Gliwice to Chemeryntsi in Ukraine], accessed November 20, 2020, <https://gliwice.gosc.pl/doc/5018363.Miejsce-dla-Kostki>.

struction of the Polish cultural heritage, tangible traces of the presence of Western Latin civilization on these territories. I think that mentioning at least these selected examples will be a kind of stimulus to get the relevant departments and institutions in Poland interested in the subject. On the other hand, I do not have any expectations towards the Ukrainian side which, at various levels, has more than once demonstrated its attachment to civilizationally different models, definitely different from the standards of Latin Europe.

Castles and palaces

Aside from Latin churches, it is the castles, fortresses, and mansions that are traditionally associated with Polishness in the Borderlands. As in the case of the Latin churches, only some of the buildings have received proper conservation and care. Mostly it concerns the monuments which are included in the obligatory historical concept, to which the representatives of individual families, owners of castles and palaces, are drawn, giving grounds to obscure or erase their Polishness. Others, on the other hand, suffer irreparable losses which they did not experience either in times of war or in times of other turmoil ravaging tracts of land with centuries-old traditions of civilization. We must realize that because of the neglect – the criminal neglect of recent decades, of recent years – there have been irreparable losses which cannot be made up for or recovered.

The castle of the Sieniawski family in Berezhany is considered to be the most magnificent monument of defensive architecture of the Renaissance period. The castle, known as the Borderland Wawel, was made famous by Juliusz Słowacki. In 2011, a wall of the 500 year old fortress, closely connected with Polish culture, collapsed. The oldest part of the walls, dating back to the middle of the 16th century, was destroyed.²⁰ The Sieniawski Castle in Berezhany, built

20. “Zamek w Brzeżanach popada w ruinę” [The castle in Berezhany is falling into Ruin], accessed October 25, 2020, <https://kresy.pl/wydarzenia/zamek-w-brzezanach-popada-w-ruine/>.

from 1554, was one of the most important fortresses in the Borderlands. Built on the plan of an irregular pentagon, with three artillery towers, it resembled a medieval fortress.²¹ When, after World War I, the Berezhany castle fell into ruin, alarm bells went off. The whole society mobilized to halt the march of destruction: “It is a sacred duty of the state and the nation to save this valuable monument, with which so many luminous memories have grown, for posterity and national culture”.²² Before the war, Poles were able to conserve the monument and start restoring its pre-partition appearance. The war and the Soviet annexation of the Polish eastern voivodships interrupted the revitalization of the monument. Soviet ruin followed, crowned by the present destruction. In a clumsy attempt to make the monument look like ‘Ukrainian Versailles’, the new owners are idly tolerating the destruction of this architectural pearl of Podolia.²³

On April 13, 2013 half of one of the towers of the *castle in Chervonohrad* in Podolia collapsed. Today the site of the monument is leased by the Ternopil Diocese of the Autocephalous Orthodox Church. The lease began in 2002, but since then nothing has been done to restore, renovate or even protect the ruins.²⁴ It is a historic castle belonging to three dynasties founded in the 15th century. In 1672, a huge Turkish army flooded Podolia and occupied Kamianets. The Turks sent troops deep into the country to capture individual fortresses. The defenders of Chervonohrad for several days repulsed

21. R. Marcinek, “Kresowy Wawel (zamek w Brzeżanach)” [Borderland Wawel (The Castle in Berezhany)], accessed October 25, 2020, https://www.wilanow-palac.pl/kresowy_wawel_zamek_w_brzezanach.html.

22. A. Czołowski, B. Janusz, *Przeszłość i zabytki województwa tarnopolskiego* [The Past and Monuments of the Ternopil Voivodeship] (Tarnopol: Powiatowa Organizacja Narodowa w Tarnopolu, 1926), 67.

23. See: “Олексій Бухало, Бережанський замок – як український Вавель став броварнею?” [Berezhany Castle – how the Ukrainian Wawel Became a Brewery], accessed October 25, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/blogs-44529134>.

24. I. Bondarew, “Czerwonogród” [Chervonohrad], accessed November 12, 2020, <https://kuriergalicyjski.com/historia/zabytki/2517-czerwonogr.d>.

the attacks of the enemy. But the Turks tried a trick – they changed the course of the river Dzhuryn, which surrounded the castle with a loop, and crossed the river on the other side. They captured the castle, felled the defenders, and burned the fortress with the church and monastery. A reminder of the siege remained – a magnificent 16-metre-high Dzhuryn waterfall, the highest plain waterfall in the territory of the present Ukraine. The former glory of the village belongs to the past. A few years before the collapse of the castle tower, the Polish newspaper in Ukraine “Kurier Galicyjski” was warning:

It is incomprehensible why the local authorities are incapable of doing anything but putting up some shed made from an old bus, where they sell beer. There are no toilets, no equipped resting places, no garbage bins. There are, however, kiosks with sausages and alcohol. And it would be worth it to charge money for entering the castle territory and use it for cleaning the monuments. If the situation does not change, in a few years there will be nothing left to see here. What has not been destroyed by war and time, may disappear due to ordinary human indifference to our own history.²⁵

So it has happened and continues to happen.

For centuries, the *castle in Pomoriany* was one of those famous fortresses of the Republic of Poland that successfully resisted Turkish, Tatar and Cossack invasions. When Jakub Sobieski owned the castle in the 17th century, it was the beloved place of his son, the future king Jan Sobieski. The last owner in the interwar period was Count Jerzy Józef Potocki, a diplomat and senator of the Second Republic. In 2018, the front wall of the castle in Pomoriany collapsed.

25. O. Dudar, “Czerwonogrodu nie znajdziemy już na żadnej mapie” [Cherwonograd Can no Longer be Found on Any Map], *Kurier Galicyjski*, no. 13 (113), 2010, 24.

Currently, the remains of the castle are the eastern and southern wings, which were still inhabited at the beginning of the 19th century, a round tower in the northeastern part, and fragments of earth fortifications.²⁶

The former Lanckoronski Palace in Tartakiv was built by Zbigniew Lanckoronski on the foundations of the 17th century castle of the Potocki family, whose one-story wing was used during construction. The palace, in French neo-baroque style, was modeled on the Casino de Paris in Monte Carlo. During World War I, troops quartered in the palace destroyed or looted some of the furnishings, the rest was lost in 1939. After the war, the palace housed offices of kolkhoz and was quite well maintained. In 1995, it was burned down by “unknown perpetrators”. Today it is a ruin without roofs and vaults.²⁷

In 2018, the north side of the former *castle in Sudova Vyshnya* fell. Just near the current border with Poland, some 30 km, the remnants collapsed, no longer salvageable. It was one of the most magical castles in Ukraine, the remains of the Komorowski-Mars residence, surrounded by a unique park, which miraculously preserved its authentic charm. The period of splendor of this beautiful monument ended after the final consolidation of Soviet power in the former Lviv region of the Second Polish Republic. The palace of the Mars family was turned into a dormitory of the local agricultural technical school (it is worth mentioning that before the war the very building of the technical school housed the Polish Cooperative Bank, the Health maintenance organization, and the floor was occupied by a priest). In the 80s, the palace burned down and since then it has been in ruins. Nowadays, the monument is a communal prop-

26. “Zawałiła się część ściany pałacu Sobieskich w Pomorzanach” [Part of a Wall of the Sobieski Palace in Pomorany has Collapsed], accessed November 12, 2020, <http://slowopolskie.org/zawalila-sie-czesc-ściany-palacu-sobieskich-w-pomorzanach/>.

27. “Tartaków” [Tartakiv], accessed November 20, 2020, <https://kresy.pl/kresopedia/tartakow-3/>.

erty and after the decentralization reform, the authorities of Sudova Vyshnia started to look for an investor who could arrange a hotel or other recreational and service facility in the former Mars Palace. Wandering around the palace and gazing into the dark abyss of its cellars, one has a feeling that one has come 100 years back, to a completely different era.²⁸ Currently, the palace is destroyed by vandals who search for some iron elements for sale, bricks are taken apart for construction. Only the remains of the walls should not fall down on someone. And now birches several meters high grow on the walls.

As in the situation of the previous section, the listed monuments in ruins or in a state unsuitable for reconstruction are extracted from the general picture of progressive ruin overwhelming the majority of Polish monuments in the territories encompassed by the Latin Archdiocese of Lviv, the establishment of the exact number would have to be handled by the relevant departments and institutions of the Republic of Poland. If such records are kept and the knowledge and awareness of the inevitable destruction of Polish traces in the East accompanies the relevant state authorities, this is yet another proof of their ineptitude.

Other monuments

In addition to churches, palaces, and fortresses, other buildings that are particularly valuable to Polish history and culture are also passing into oblivion. On March 24, 2018, a fire consumed the buildings of the former Jesuit college in Khyriv. The Teaching and Learning Center of Jesuits in Khyriv was established in the 19th century and operated until 1939. It was one of the best equipped schools in Poland and Europe. The enormous school building had spacious classrooms, well-equipped labs, a library with approxi-

28. J. Wójcicki, "Magia pałacu Marsów w Sądowej Wiszni" [The Magic of the Palace of the Mars Family in Sudova Vyshnya], accessed November 20, 2020, <https://www.kuriergalicyjski.com/historia/zabytki/6060-magia-palacu-mar-sow-w-sadowej-wiszni>.

mately 30,000 items, and rich geographical and historical collections. The school had its own botanical garden and astronomical observatory. It educated many future scientists, politicians, writers and social activists, including Eugeniusz Kwiatkowski, deputy prime minister and builder of Gdynia, General Roman Abraham, or poets Jan Brzechwa and Kazimierz Wierzyński.²⁹

The phenomenon, presented in its fragmentary dimension on selected examples, provokes deep reflection. Here, in the 21st century, when totalitarianisms have vanished and European heritage and Western cultural and civilization models are popularized, terrible things happen beyond the eastern border of Poland as far as the preservation, care and protection of historical monuments are concerned. Many of these devastations date back to the last years, the time of the declared ‘European’ changes in Ukraine, and take place during the implementation of ‘European programs’. Official propaganda about strategic Polish-Ukrainian cooperation/friendship is common. The question arises, if such a ruin exists and progresses in the area of interpenetration of cultures and monuments of friendly nations, then how is the cultural legacy supposed to look like in the borderland where enemies meet?

The clash of civilizations

Trying to understand this phenomenon, one can associate it with the reality at the meeting point of civilizations, where one culture tries to erase or annihilate the traces of the presence of another. Is this not the only rational explanation for the phenomenon of the widespread, massive, and irreversible destruction of Polish monuments in the East?

According to some definitions, the Latin culture reached as far to the East, as far the Gothic cathedrals were built. In the present

29. “Ukraina: Pożar w dawnym kolegium ojców Jezuitów w Chyrowie” [Ukraine: Fire in the Former College of Jesuit Fathers in Khyriv], accessed November 20, 2020, <https://dorzeczy.pl/swiat/59797/Ukraina-Pozar-w-dawnym-kolegium-ojcow-Jezuitow-w-Chyrowie.html>.

situation, the last cathedral – Gothic in foundation but rebuilt over the centuries – survives in Kamenets Podolski. At the crossroads of civilization, Catholic churches were seen as traces of the presence of Latin and Catholic culture. As such, they were viciously destroyed and plundered. They were regarded as border posts of Latin culture, foreign to the local Ruthenian culture, traces that had to be destroyed. The same logic was used by the Russian clerks who plundered churches after every national uprising in the 19th century. The swordsmen of the tsarist empire, consolidating their rule in the territories inhabited by Poles for centuries, appealed for the destruction of all traces of foreign domination. Inseparably – which was also correct – combining the Latin Church and Polish culture into one concept, the new hosts tried to eliminate all material traces, including first of all Latin temples and monasteries. They were called border posts of foreign rule. When, after the November Uprising, more Catholic monasteries were closed down, Tsar Nicholas I joyfully exclaimed: “Praise God, here we have again demolished several enemy strongholds”.³⁰ The propaganda about the Polish occupation of Holy Ruthenia and the need to restore the true Ruthenian character to this area was exploited with all its might. Aren't similar motivations also guiding the current authorities and society in Ukraine, who are indifferent to the ruin and destruction of the remnants of Polish culture in these areas?

Taking the whole spectrum of horrifying events which, in spite of the media silence, appear in the public arena, it can be stated that the situation of Polish monuments in Ukraine is one of the elements of a very difficult relationship which, in spite of propaganda slogans repeated as in the past in the times of ‘unshakable’ Polish-Soviet friendship, predicts a total devastation of the monuments of Polish culture in the former Kresy. This cannot be separated from the

30. W. Osadczy, *Święta Ruś. Rozwój i oddziaływanie idei prawosławia w Galicji* [Holy Ruthenia. The Development and Influence of the Idea of Orthodoxy in Galicia] (Lublin: UMCS, 2007), 355.

general climate created by the prohibition to exhume and bury the remains of Poles – victims of the Bandera genocide, the persistent refusal to return the churches in Lviv (Church of Mother of God of Candles Day, Church of St. Mary Magdalene) to the Catholics, the prohibition to commemorate figures associated with Polish history and culture (the prohibition to perpetuate in the street name St. Józef Bilczewski, Metropolitan of Lviv, and numerous other facts constantly appearing in these areas.

This situation was quite bluntly illustrated by the Archbishop of Lviv, Mieczysław Mokrzycki, who remarked in his speech at the Catholic University of Lublin: “Quite often the only motivation for not giving us temples is the slogan «not to give the church back to the Poles»”. How else can one explain the fact of taking away from us the Church of Mother of Candles Day, which adjoins the Latin Metropolitan Curia of Lviv. Those who hastily created a Greek Catholic parish behind the wall of the Curia are not ashamed of the gross abnormality of this state of affairs, which is observed with disgust every day by the residents of the city and tourists”.³¹

Certainly, this state of affairs should mobilize the Polish society, scientific and academic circles, and the organs of the Polish state. A global, comprehensive program of saving the remnants of Polish culture in the East should be created. Such a program should be included in the strategy of Polish diplomacy and should involve a number of activities on various levels aimed at saving and preserving at least the remains of the once magnificent objects radiating to the entire region. In a situation where Poland’s involvement

31. M. Mokrzycki, “Archidiecezja Lwowska, XXV lat wolności, demokracji i dyskryminacji. Referat wygłoszony na KUL 9 maja 2016 r. z okazji inauguracji działalności Instytutu Pamięci i Dziedzictwa Kresów w Lublinie” [The Archdiocese of Lviv 25 years of freedom, democracy and discrimination. Paper delivered at the Catholic University of Lublin on May 9, 2016 on the occasion of the inauguration of the Institute for the Memory and Heritage of the Borderlands in Lublin], *Nasz Dziennik*, no. 135 (5583), 2016, 7.

in various reforms in Ukraine is crucial for the neighbouring country, we should use all tools to encourage and force respect for the Polish legacy in this country. As mentioned in the “Endangered Heritage” Report, the sizable developmental financial aid regularly granted by Poland to, among others, Ukraine (in 2017, it amounted to PLN 61 million) should be combined with efforts to save Polish monuments.³² We also realize that taking care of our monuments abroad is also an indicator of the sovereignty and prestige of the state. Radical changes in this aspect of the functioning of the Polish state will be an integral part of the general sanitation of socio-political relations in our country, testifying to the growth of Poland’s sovereignty and role in world politics.

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